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THE IMPACT OF MERCANTILISM AND WAR ON THE  
SCOTTISH MARINE  
1651-1791

by

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis seeks to answer the question - 'To what extent did Scotland's membership that trading system, later dubbed 'mercantilism', dictate the course and direction of her maritime institutions and shipping industry?'

Its resolution sets four primary objectives. Firstly, to set Scottish maritime affairs in context with the evolving political, economic and administrative aspects of the system. Secondly, to evaluate the impact of the Union and the imposition of the English customs model on the emerging Scottish shipping industry. Thirdly, to analyse the role played by the endemic warfare and smuggling inherent to the system contributed, in the growth rate and shift in the regional distribution of the components of the Scottish marine - 'foreign', coastal' and fisheries'. Fourthly, to review the influence of the system on the regional development of navigational aids, port facilities and shipbuilding.

The unresolved status of Scotland as an independent trading nation resulted in retaliatory Navigation Acts and aggressive acts that dispelled the prospect of a peaceful co-existence with England. The Union resolved this impasse granting full access rights to Scottish shippers re-registering under the British Navigation Acts. By the 1730s the nucleus of expertise and hulls had been accumulated to exploit the Scottish ports' locational advantage in the Atlantic economy. After 1750 the bounty system nurtured the Scottish herring and whaling industries. The American War of Independence breached the Navigation Acts while stimulating the shipbuilding industry. The subsequent Act of Registry (1786) set new standards in maritime administration. The following Consolidation Act (1787) removed many of the disincentives from the existing fiscal regime. The mode of operation of the Scottish shipping industry was significantly altered thereafter.



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On a more personal note I would like to record my gratitude to Richard F. Dell, Michael Dun, Alan W. Graham, Sue Mowat, Donald and Mary Petrie and Frances Wilkins for their generous access to their notes and resources.

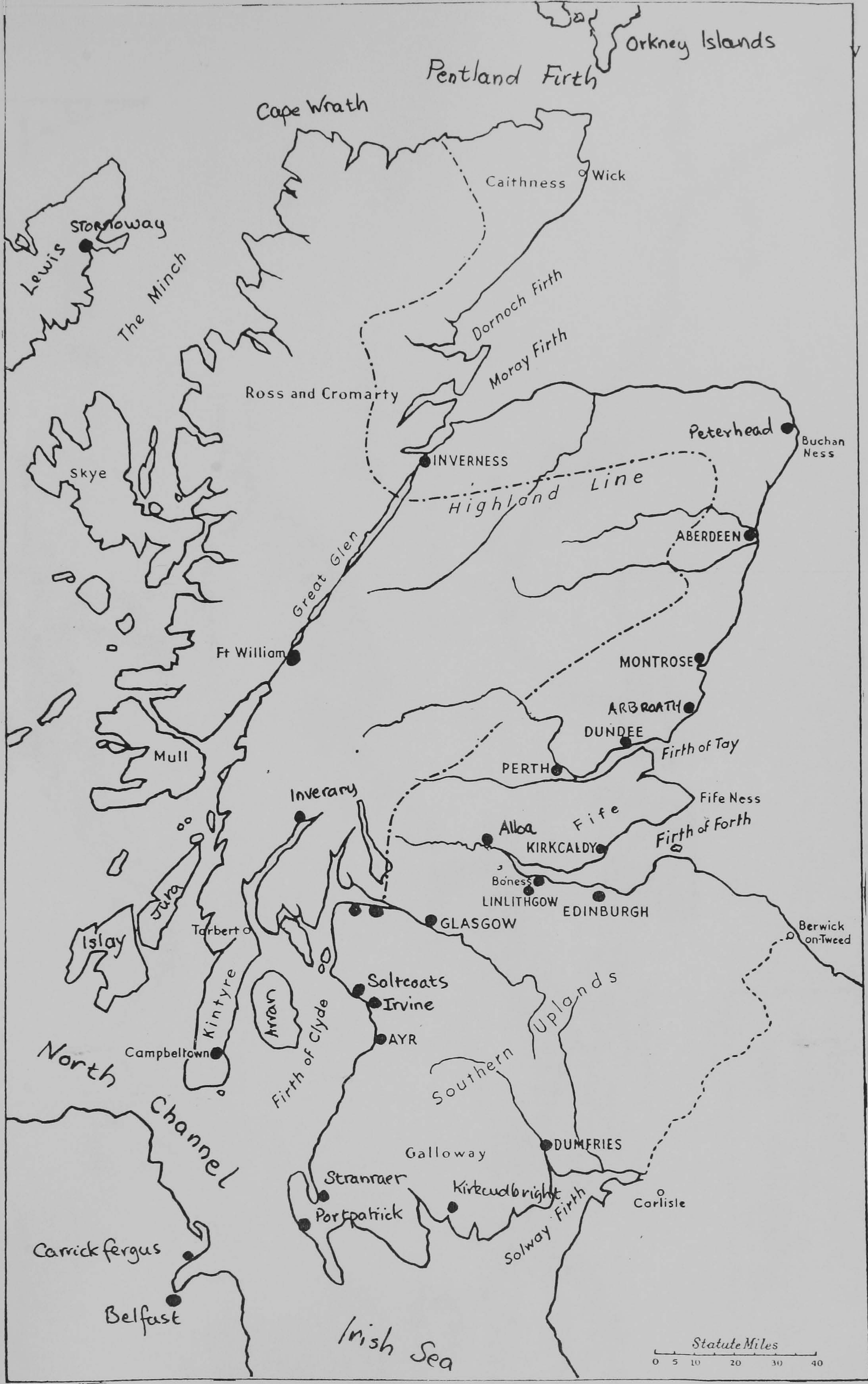
Lastly, I am indebted, as always, to Jan Bateman for her unstinting support and encouragement throughout a period of research and write-up that extended far beyond all expectations.

Eric J. Graham

**ABBREVIATIONS**

CL	Carnegie Library (Ayr)
HCA	High Court of Admiralty (PRO)
HCAS	High Court of Admiralty of Scotland (SRO)
GCA	Glasgow City Archives
<i>GM</i>	<i>Glasgow Mercury</i>
GUL	Glasgow University Library
<i>LL</i>	<i>Lloyd's List</i>
<i>LR</i>	<i>Lloyd's Register</i>
NAM	North Ayrshire Museum
<i>OSA</i>	[Old] Statistical Account of Scotland
PRO	Public Records Office
<i>RPC</i>	Records of the Privy Council (Scotland)
SRO	Scottish Records Office

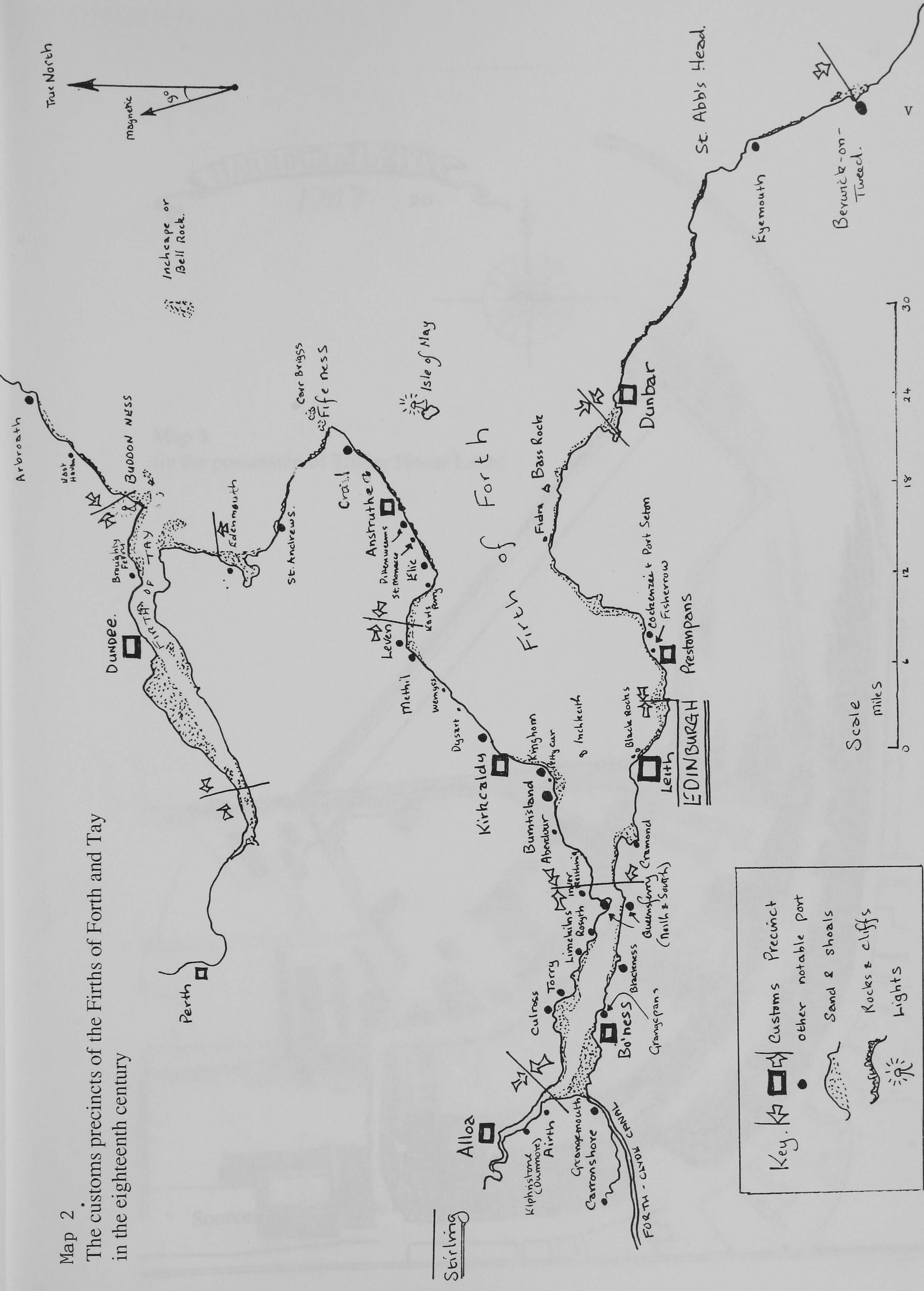




Map 1. The sea areas and principal ports of Scotland



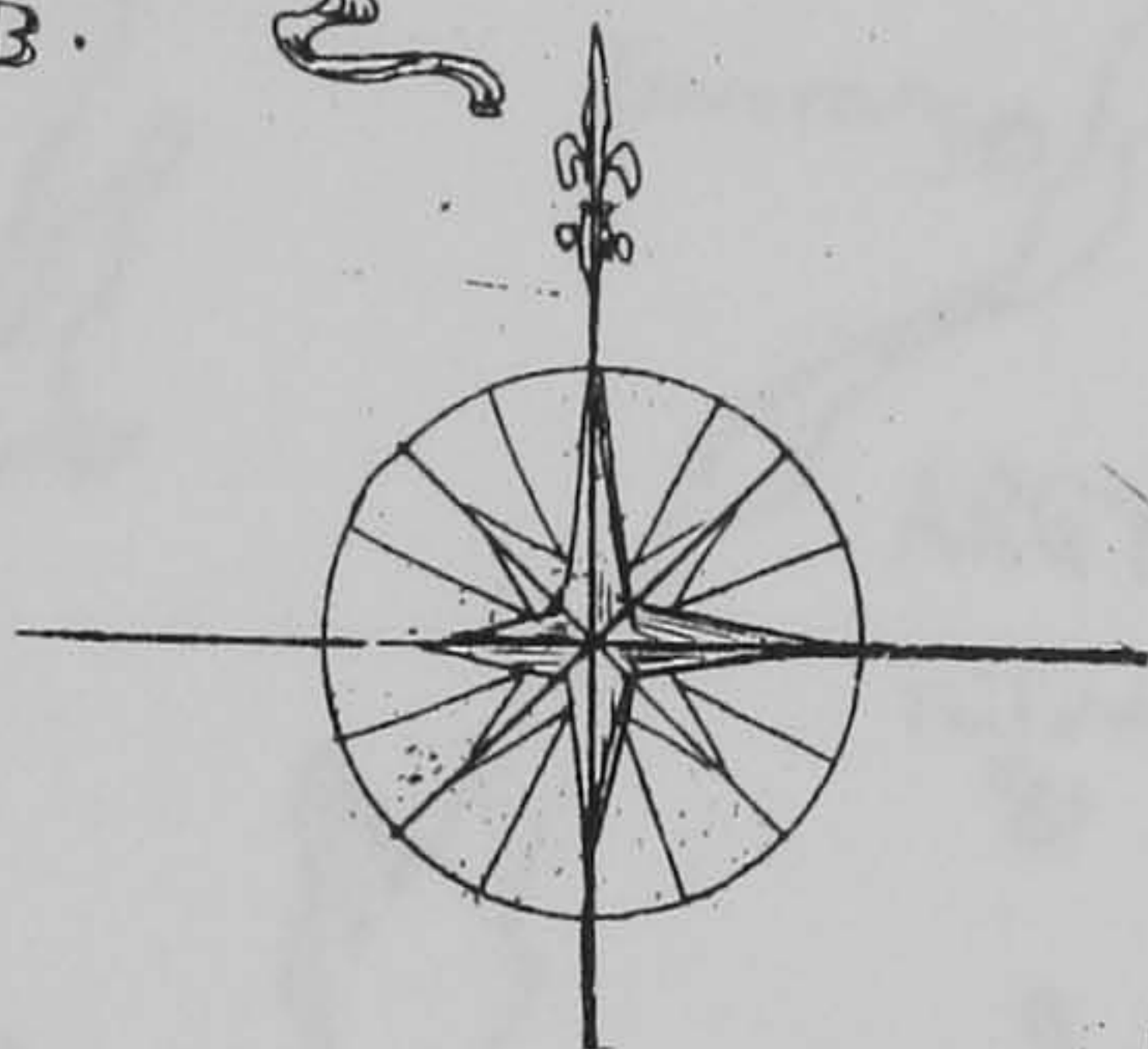
Map 2  
 The customs precincts of the Firths of Forth and Tay  
 in the eighteenth century



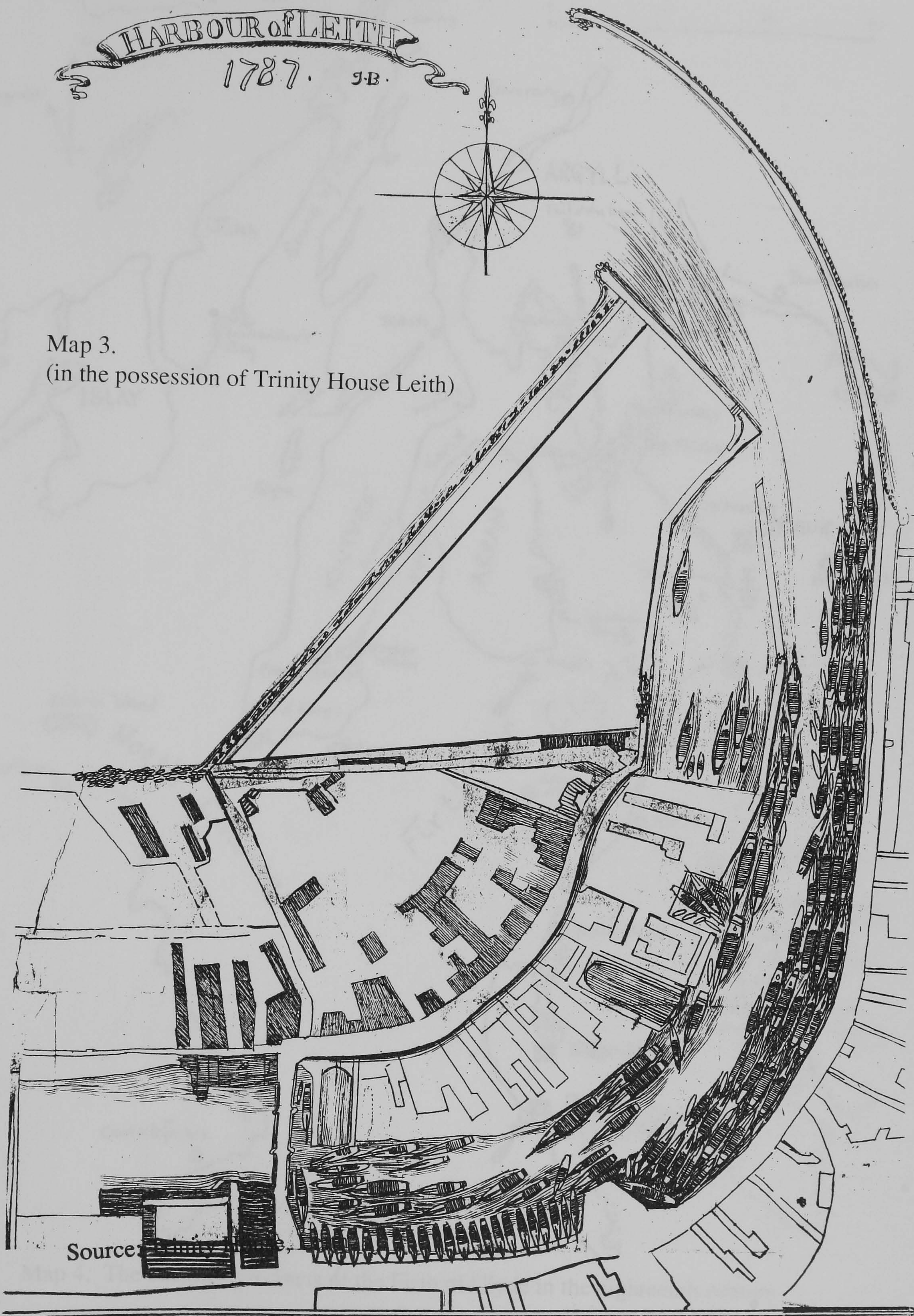
Key.		Customs Precinct
		other notable port
		Sand & shoals
		Rocks & cliffs
		Lights



HARBOUR of LEITH  
1787. J.B.

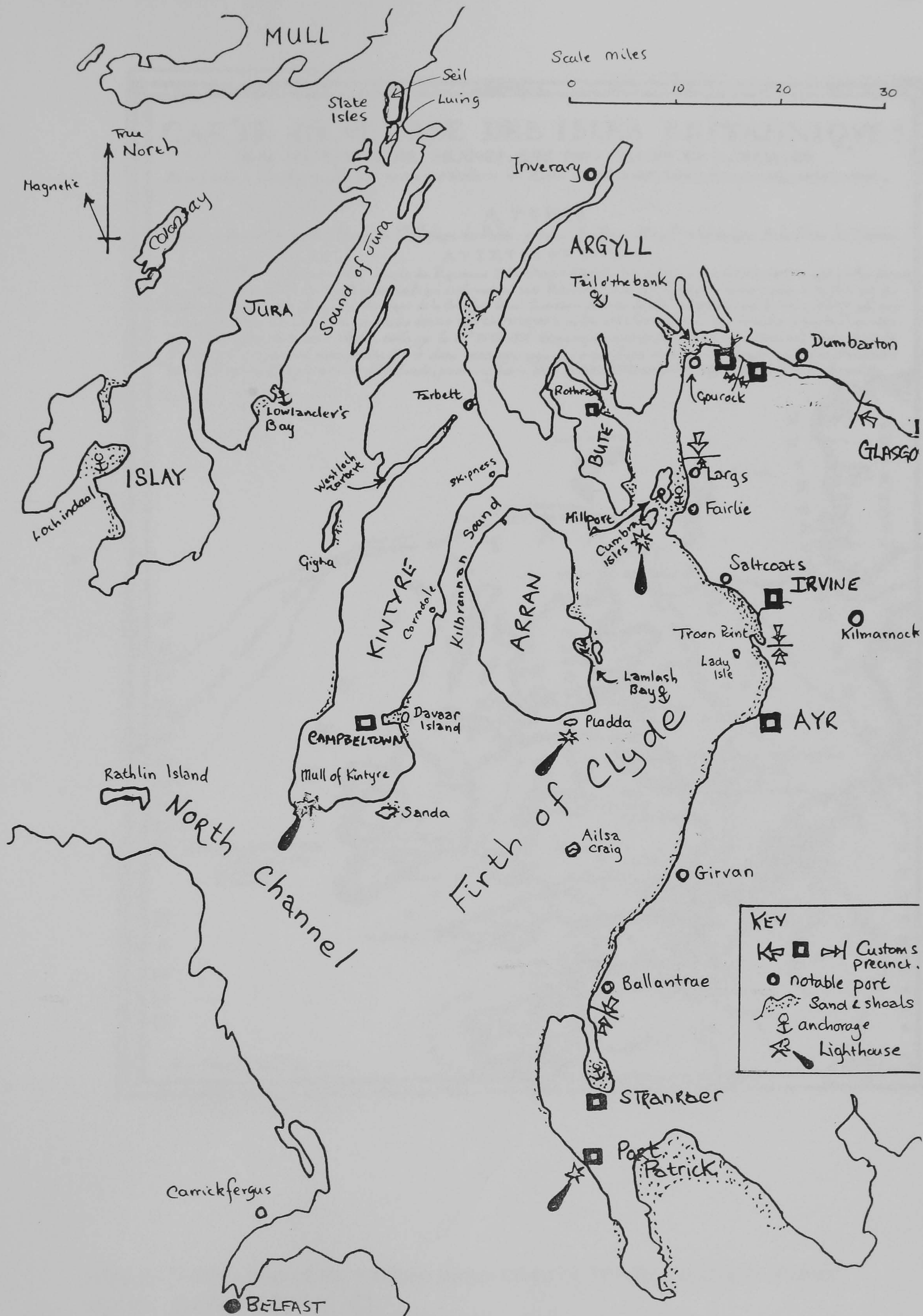


Map 3.  
(in the possession of Trinity House Leith)



Source: *Antiquary*





Map 4. The customs precincts of the Firth of Clyde in the eighteenth century

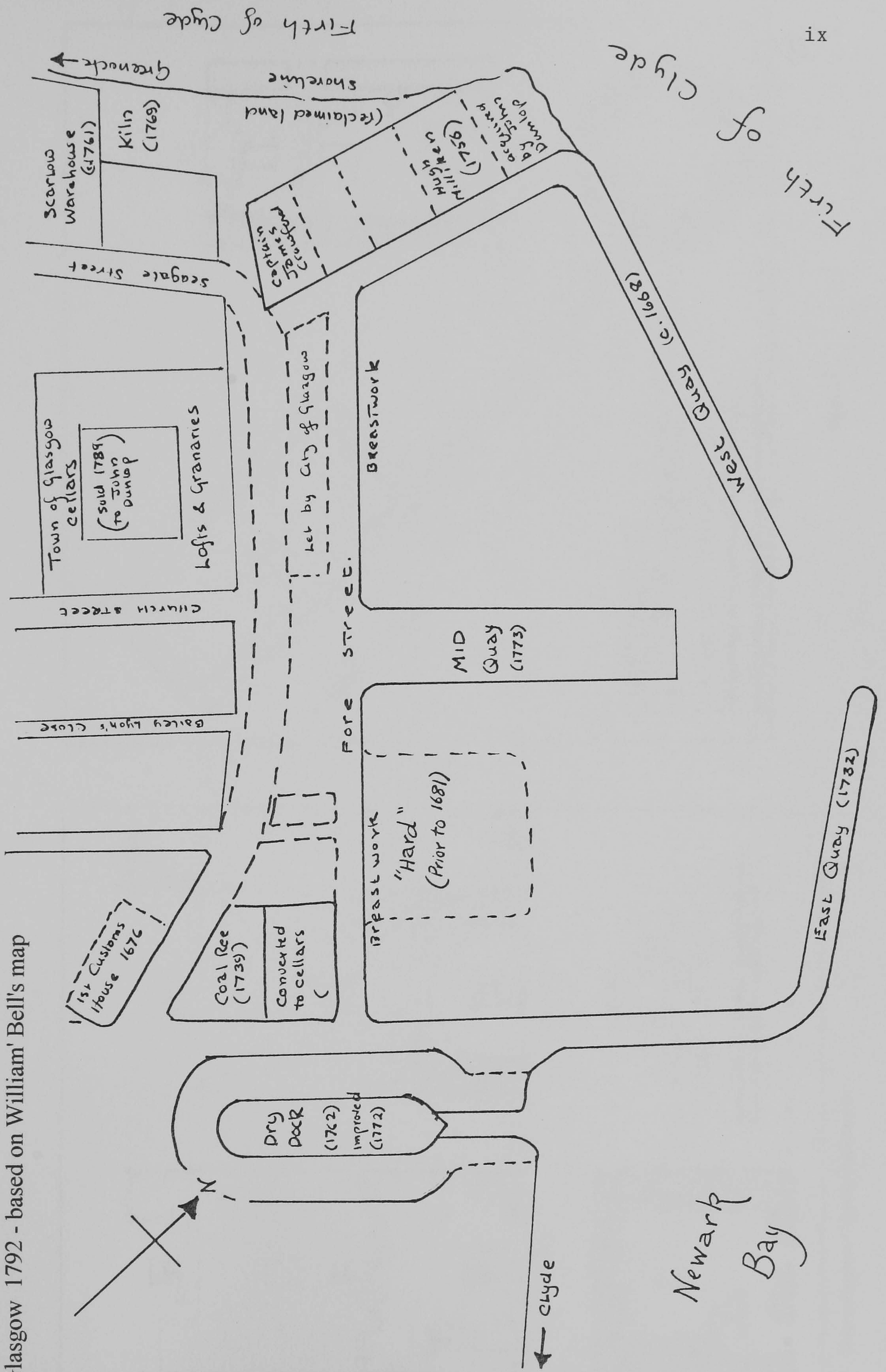




Map 5. Nolan's map of the wartime routes taken by British and Dutch Atlantic traders. Published Paris 1702.

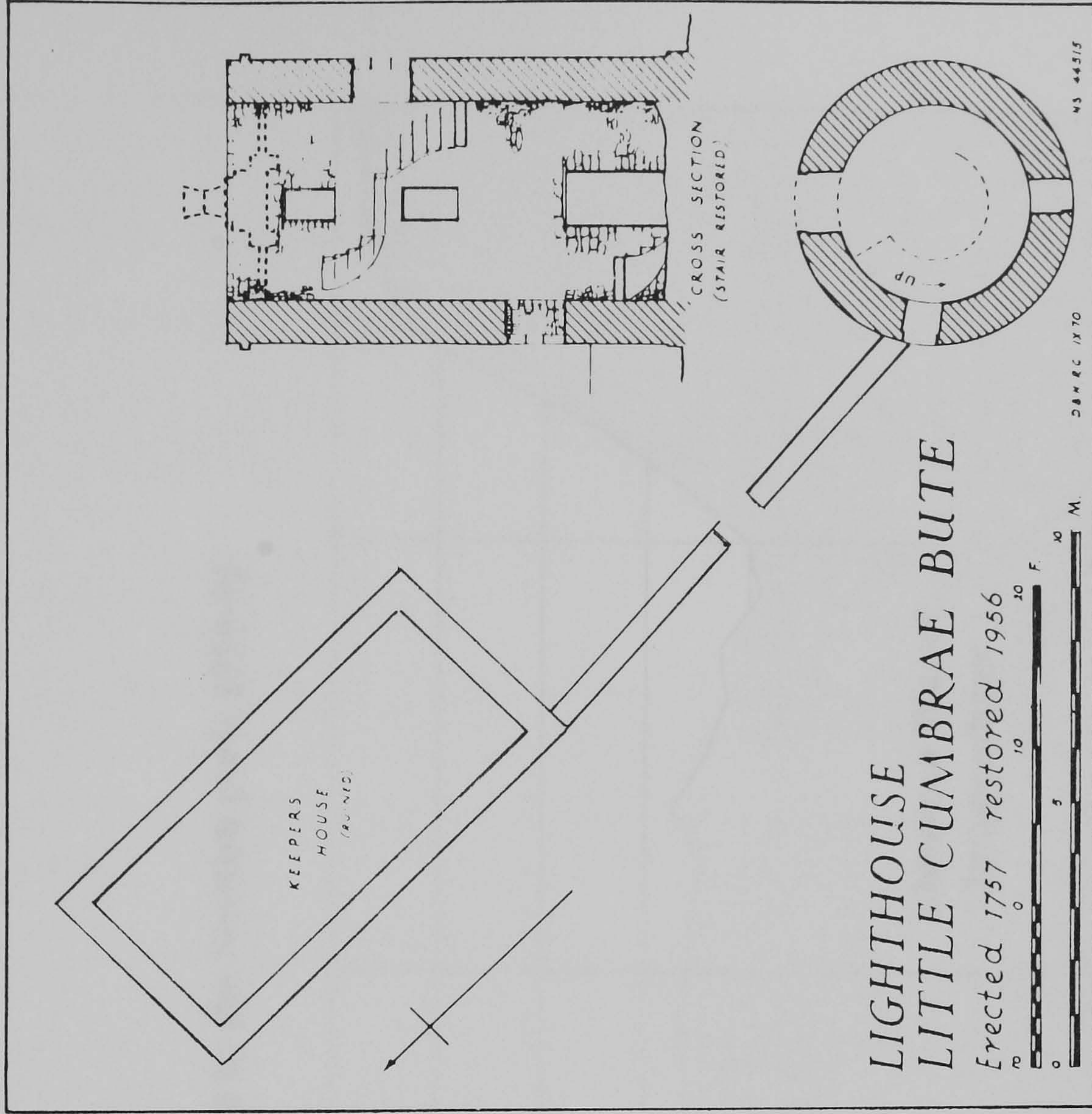
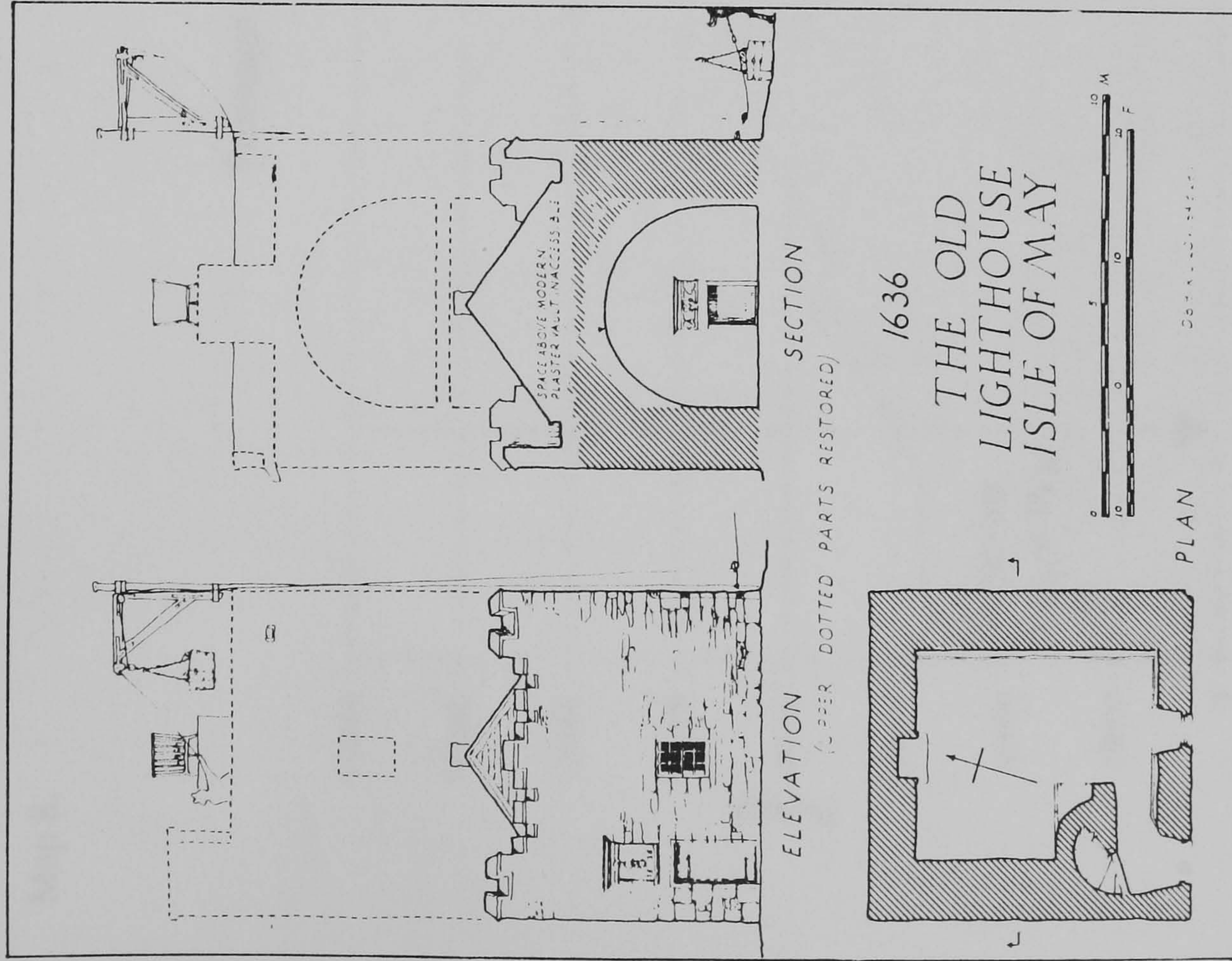


Port Glasgow 1792 - based on William Bell's map





The pre-1790 Scottish lighthouses



Source: Hague and Christie, *Lighthouses*

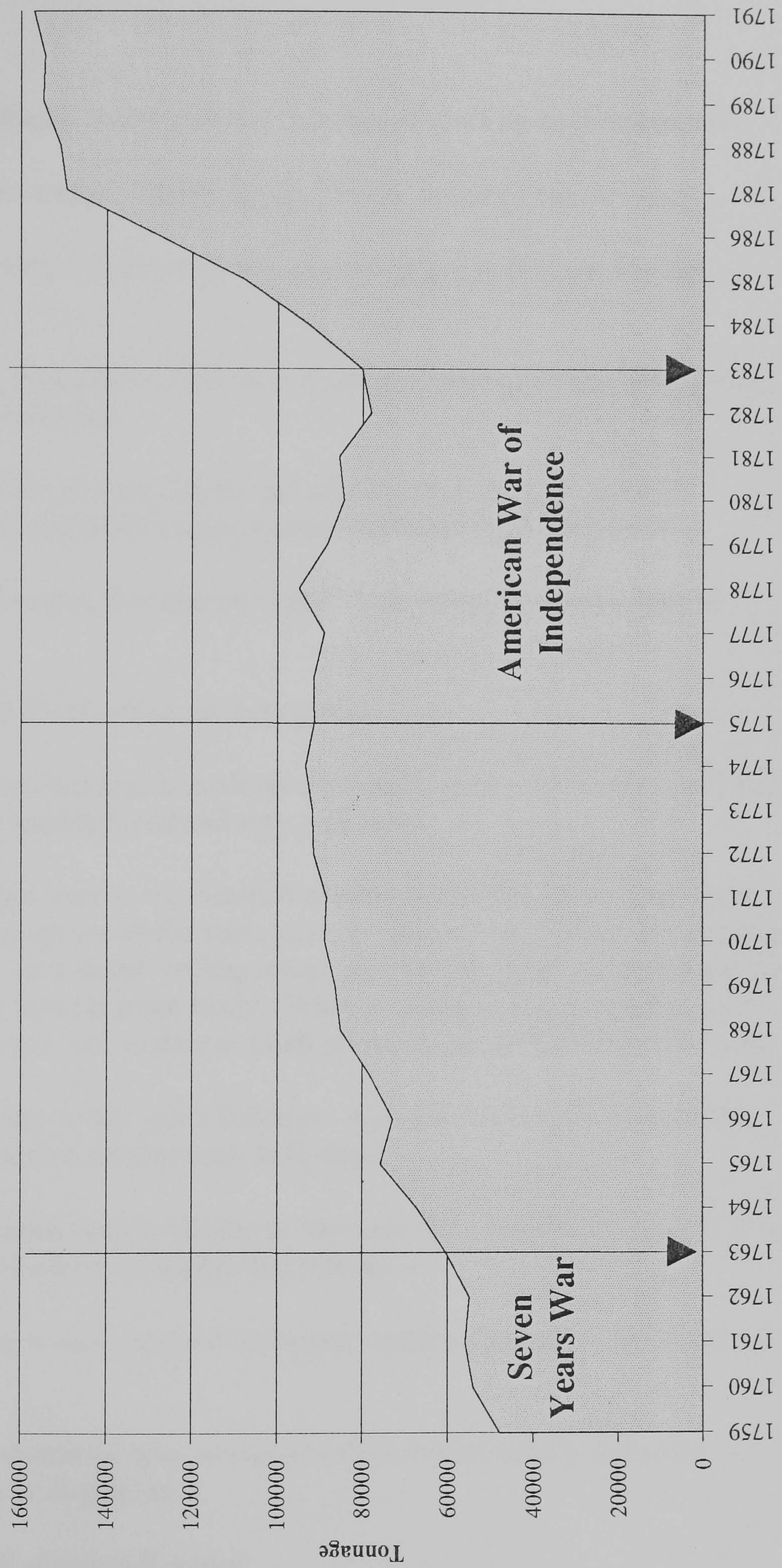
Map 7.

X



Map 8.

### Tonnage owned by the Scottish ports 1759-91





## GLOSSARY

### Types of vessels

Birlin - large west highland oared open boat capable of crossing major channels.

Brig or brigantine - two masted, square rigged, decked vessel of various sizes.

Bucker - the general name for an armed two-masted lugger as first used by the smugglers of Buckie.

Buss - decked fishing boat within 20-80 tons class as prescribed by the bounty rules. Tackle and nets also prescribed.

Coble - open boat used in inshore fishing and oared by four men - or more if working further out. Capable of stepping a small sail in the right conditions.

Cutter - single-masted vessel, fore and aft rigged, with 'sharp' hull and extended bowsprit.

Doggar - a two-masted Dutch off-shore fishing boat.

Fluyt boat - the standardised Dutch medium-sized bulk carrier (up to 600 tons) flat-bottomed. with severe tumble-home and very high stern.

Galley - The use of this term in the Scottish context at this time is unclear. It may have been either a corruption of the term 'galleon' (as in high sterned ocean-going armed sailing vessel) or a small sailing vessel pierced for large oars (sweeps) for manoeuvrability. The latter is more likely. What is certain is that it was not used in the Mediterranean context; i.e., to denote a hull primarily propelled by banks of oars.

Jager - Dutch supply ship to the grand fisheries. Also used as hospital ship and to run high-priced early season catches back to Holland.

Lugger - small two-masted vessel with lug square sails that can be set to work high to windward. Much favoured by smugglers and privateers.

Schooner - two-masted vessel, fore and aft rigged, commonly used in American and West Indian waters.

Shallop - small fast two-masted open or partially deck vessel, usually schooner rigged, used in fishing or dispatches.

Ship - three-masted, all square sail, vessel.

Sloop - general term for single-masted vessels without cutter bow or bowsprit.

Snow - variation of brig where the rear mast has a separate up-right from which to set the mizzen sail.

Sixteen - High prowd open fishing boat oared by six men used in Shetland and Orkney for off-shore line fishing.

Pink - narrow, round-sterned Dutch carrier with a flat floor interior.

Wherry - broad-decked, shallow draft, hull usually with lee boards and low freeboard suitable for the deployment of sweeps.

Yacht - a single-masted decked hull, usually fore and aft rigged, originally of Dutch design.

### **Customs terms**

Customs precinct - stretch of shoreline under the supervisor of a Collector.

Head port - the reporting port of the precinct.

Creek - general term used to describe smaller harbours and anchorages within the precinct.

Collector - customs officer directly responsible to Edinburgh for the precinct.

Comptroller - second in line to Collector and responsible for accounts.

Surveyor - customs officer in charge of tidewaiters.

Tidewaiter - customs officer put onboard vessels on entry or departure.

Landwaiter - customs officer deployed on quay side and customs house.

Blue book - the manifest of cargo kept onboard by the captain and stamped or witness by customs officers.

Enumerated goods - those goods listed by the Navigation Acts.

Rummaging - searching the vessel for contraband or undeclared goods.

Prizing - the method of packing of barrels and hogshead.



## INTRODUCTION

This study seeks to demonstrate how state intervention and warfare in the pursuit of mercantilist goals largely determined, intentionally and otherwise, the development of the Scottish marine and its institutions during the period 1656-1791.<sup>1</sup>

### **'Mercantilism' and 'the system' as historical terms**

Perceptions as to the validity of the historical term 'mercantilism' varies greatly between schools of history. Those primarily interested in the foreign policy of this period are generally dismissive of what is, in their view, a retrospective invention that parcels a hotchpotch of reactive and restrictive legislation on trade. As Anderson declares:

mercantilism, even if it can be spoken about as a unity, was not an inquiry into abstract principles of wealth, in the sense that Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, published in 1776 was ... [it was] a collection of attitudes and assumptions, almost an administrative technology, rather than a science of economics.<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, whilst acknowledging this state of affairs during the formative seventeenth century, many economic historians readily apply the term 'mercantilist system' to the administrative regime first introduced in England after 1696. For as Hoon proclaims of the Navigation Act of that year, along with its new regulating agencies, 'marks at once the embarkation upon the mercantilism that is identified with the eighteenth century'.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'mercantilism' has been ascribed to an extensive period of European history; namely, from the advent of the voyages of discovery to the repeal of the British Corn Laws (1492-1846); P .O'Brien, ' Did Europe's mercantilist empires pay?', *History Today*, 46, (1996), p. 32.

<sup>2</sup> M.S. Anderson, *Europe in the eighteenth century* (London, 1987), p. 114.

<sup>3</sup> E.E. Hoon, *The Organisation of the English Customs System 1696-1786* (Newton Abbot, 1968), p. 3.

This functional form of mercantilism had a second pillar: the protectionist wall of high import tariffs and restrictions which was raised in the decade after 1696. As with the Navigation Acts, this additional legislation was largely the work of vested interests which exploited firstly William's, and latterly Anne's, dependency on the English Parliament to raise the increasingly higher levels of revenue required to maintain their large standing armies. In this manner the mercantilist system synonymous with the eighteenth century came about as much by accident as design. As Parry remarks:

'system' is perhaps too tidy a description - of rules and exceptions, many of which were drafted *ad hoc* to deal with particular situations or to still the outcries of particular groups of people, rather than to realise consistent economic theories. In so far as they dealt with colonial matters, however, they did embody certain clear administrative principles.<sup>4</sup>

It is therefore with due regard to the limitations highlighted by these differing viewpoints that this study deploys the term 'mercantilism' to encompass those assumptions and attitudes towards seaborne trade that were part of the wider agenda on international relations. The term 'mercantilist system' however is used to describe the post-1696 regime of elaborate controls, restrictions and duties imposed on the foreign-going trade and shipping of the nation and her colonies.

### **The assumptions behind mercantilism**

The main assumption driving the mercantilist mind-set in ruling circles was that political and military power was ultimately derived from wealth (initially perceived as bullion). This widely-held stance gained international credence as the Spanish monopoly of the influx of new bullion from the New World was seen to finance the

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<sup>4</sup> J.H. Parry, *Trade and Dominion* (London, 1971), pp. 51-2.



alliances and mercenary armies that threatening the continuing independence, if not the very existence, of many smaller European states.

By the early seventeenth century the spectre of a Spanish 'universal monarchy' was a pre-occupation with court politicians and the 'bullionist' school of political economists. Shifts in the distribution of wealth between the nations were increasingly perceived in terms of potential shifts in the 'balance of power' in Europe. This, in turn, largely dictated foreign policy and alliances in the dynastic wars of Europe for the next hundred years.<sup>5</sup>

By the mid-seventeenth century the debate had advanced to focus on the question: what constituted national wealth and how should a nation state protect and extend its share of the available wealth? Thomas Munn, the leading light of the more sophisticated 'protectionist' school, promoted the argument (1664) that 'the ordinary means therefore to encrease our wealth and treasure is by foraign trade, wherein wee must ever observe this rule; to sell more to strangers yearly than wee consume of theirs in value'.<sup>6</sup> He singled-out the Dutch who, bereft of most natural advantages and of an indigenous source of bullion, thrived by dominating the 'north-south' trade of Europe and the Far East. So much so that they were on the verge of assuming the mantle of universal monarchy from the more dissolute Spanish. Colbert, the French Minister of Finance, deftly explained this simple chain of logic to his nephew serving at Rochefort (in 1666); 'trade is the source of finance, and finance is the vital nerve of war'.

It was perhaps inevitable that as an island nation, England (with a forcibly united Scotland in tow) should be the first to seek to enhance her maritime power and hence security against the Spanish and Dutch Empires by embracing the exclusive *mare clausum* stance on maritime sovereignty over her colonial and home waters (including Scottish when it suited). It was but a short step for the supporters of this ideology to

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<sup>5</sup> J. Black, *A System of Ambition? British Foreign Policy 1660-1793* (London, 1991).

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Munn, *England's Treasure by Foraign Trade. Or, the ballance of our Foraign Trade is the Rule of our Treasure* (1664), reprinted by the Economic History Society (London, 1928), p. 6.

actively promote practical measures - principally by Navigation Acts - to forcibly exclude the marine of rivals from the nation's seaborne trade and fisheries.

### **War as an instrument of mercantilist policy**

Where England led others closely followed. Scotland, France, the United Provinces and later Sweden, Denmark and Prussia created their own systems that escalated the level of competition for wealth and, ultimately, increased the risk of armed confrontation. As the available global wealth was perceived as being essentially finite, any increase in one nation's share was assumed to be at the expense of a rival. In such a hostile environment armed trading was prevalent at sea.

This predatory aspect of mercantilism increasingly came to the fore as the eighteenth century progressed and underpinned the support of the mercantile community for the series of dynastic and revolutionary wars that are a hallmark of the era. Between the installation of the first of the modern Navigation Acts (1650/1) and their dilution by Huskisson (1823), the English and Scottish marines were embroiled in ten major wars. Hostilities at sea dominated trade for over one-third of the intervening period, to which may be added a number of years when international tensions severely affected sailing patterns and frequency. At one time or another, the vessels and seamen loyal to the British crown were pitted against the privateers and naval forces of every other major Atlantic maritime power, with the exception of Portugal, Britain's oldest ally.

During this era, national security became increasingly viewed in terms of the fighting strength of the navy and the armed merchant marine relative to its rivals. A large navy was not, in itself, a guarantee of survival as much depended on the political will to unleash such a force to retain the nation's share of overseas trade. As Pitt the Elder declared, 'when trade is at stake it is your last defence: you must defend it or



perish'.<sup>7</sup> It was not, however, until the Seven Years War (1756-63) that he came to fully realise the advantages in supporting a European continental war as an instrument in extending Britain's strategic global ambitions. By merging 'continental' and 'blue water' policies, he prophetically declared, 'we will win Canada on the banks of the Elbe'.<sup>8</sup> Superior naval power proved its worth as the crushing defeats inflicted on the French fleets at Quiberon Bay and Cape Lagos paved the way the military successes in the West Indies and Canada - culminating in the capture of Quebec.

The overseas empire seized by Britain from her war-depleted rivals after 1760, vindicated Pitt the Elder and his aggressive brand of mercantilism in the eyes of most contemporary commentators. Johnson went so far as to acclaim him as 'the greatest statesman by whom Commerce was united with, and made to flourish by, War'.<sup>9</sup>

With an empire secured the mercantilist system grew more complex as Britain sought to monopolise and control the produce of her overseas possessions by channelling their conveyance to the European markets through her designated ports. By 1784 over a hundred commodities had joined the original 1696 list of produce and goods subject to regulation at the ports of Britain and her colonies.<sup>10</sup> The promotion of the fisheries - 'the nursery of seamen' for the navy in the eventuality of war - fitted readily with the prevailing mercantilist outlook and hence received state-funding via the bounty system.

The American War of Independence (effectively 1776-83) breached this system built, as it was, upon a corpus of piece-meal legislation accumulated over the past hundred years. In doing so it exposed the contradictions and fallacies of such a restrictive and inhibiting stance to trade and international relations. This study therefore

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<sup>7</sup> J. Ben Jones, *The Hanoverians: a century of growth 1714-1815* (Leicester, 1972) p. 15.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p. 86. Blue water policy stressed naval power and colonial and commercial considerations which continental policy stressed military power and the balance of power on mainland Europe.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Huskisson's *Reciprocity of Duties Act* (1823) started the dismantling of the Navigations Acts which were not wholly abolished until 1849.



concludes with the aftermath of this war and the first sweeping rationalisation of the mercantilist system (1786-1791) as ordered by Pitt the Younger.

Whilst the Navigation Acts survived the review intact, indeed if anything strengthened, the partial dismantling of the high-tariff customs regime signalled a retreat from the high mercantilist stance. This shift in government attitude laid the foundations for a more flexible order in international trading relations after the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars.

### **The Scottish experience of mercantilism and war**

Although the Scottish marine, in terms of number of vessels committed to the great overseas trades, was a relatively insignificant player in the great international mercantilist arena, the development of Scotland's shipping industry and institutions offers valuable insights into the formation and working of British mercantilism.

Prior to the Act of Union, Scotland was an independent trading nation with its own maritime institutions. In seeking to develop their own variety of mercantilism the arguments of the 'bullionist' and 'ballance of trade' schools of political economy were influential, albeit belatedly, in the deliberations of the Scottish Privy Council and its Committee on Trade.

Scottish overseas trading aspirations were however severely curtailed by the powerful alliance of English shippers and the London-based Merchant Adventurer Companies. The former primarily sought to deny Scottish access to the carrying trade of the English plantations, whilst the latter were to the fore in protecting their monopolies by denying the creation of Scottish equivalents. The ambiguous status of Scotland under the Stuarts - regally joined but commercially and fiscally separate from England - frustrated virtually every attempt at reaching an accommodation for Scottish aspirations within the existing English Navigation Acts.



The succession of William and Mary to the English throne in 1688 radically changed this relationship and unleashed pent-up national aspirations and Jacobitism in the North. The ensuing acrimonious defence of Scottish maritime sovereignty against the outrages perpetrated by English commanders in Scottish waters and the tensions created by Jacobite attacks, presents a unique case study of the interplay of aggressive mercantilism and the war dynamic in national affairs.

In the critical decade that followed, the precarious co-existence of the Scottish marine and the enforcers of the English Navigation Acts rapidly deteriorated to the point of open conflict. By the mid 1690s the advocates of the 'ballance of trade' school in Edinburgh circles were able to harness the rising tide of national indignation to join the international contest for wealth as a matter of national survival. In the view of one supporter of the newly formed Company of Scotland:

It's beyond all Controversie that it is in the Interest of all Nations to increase Trade; the Increase of which begetteth Wealth, and Riches, which in time of Warr doth more contribute to the preservation of a Nation then the multitude and valour of it's Men.<sup>11</sup>

The Company's failure to establish a trading emporium overseas on the Darien Isthmus together with the great loss of men, ships and capital, effectively ended Scotland's attempt at forging her own mercantile empire and system.<sup>12</sup>

After the Union, the fortunes of the Scottish marine were closely tied to those of the emerging British Empire. Government interest in the maritime affairs of 'North Britain' were sustained by the recurring Jacobite emergencies and the orchestrated accusations of widespread sharp practice at the Scottish ports made by the

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<sup>11</sup> Anon, *A letter from a Gentleman in the Country to His Friend at Edinburgh: Wherein it is clearly Proved, That the Scottish African and Indian Company is Exactly Calculated for the Interest of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1696), p. 3.

<sup>12</sup> As Armitage has concluded; 'in sum, the Darien Scheme venture was an alternative to dependency and corruption within Britain, and to poverty and universal monarchy in Europe'; D. Armitage, 'The Scottish vision of empire: intellectual origins of the Darien Scheme', in J. Robertson (ed.), *A Union for Empire: political thought on the British Union of 1707* (1995), pp. 97-118.



influential English mercantile lobby. The result of which was a series of customs inspections, surveys and reports on the state of the Scottish marine and ports that are second to none in detail and sweep.

### **The methodology**

The impact of the conflict factor is particularly relevant to the Scottish maritime experience during the mercantilist era as the isolated location of many Scottish ports and sea areas in wartime actively encouraged enemy raiders to penetrate deep into Scottish home waters. During the American War of Independence the more outlying coastal communities came under direct attack to the detriment of their seaborne trade. This study strives therefore to integrate 'naval' with 'maritime' history at both the national and regional levels; and to relate and analyse the inter-play of mercantilism and war during the war-strewn period 1650-1791.<sup>13</sup>

To this end the impact of major events, domestic and international, on Scottish maritime affairs has been placed in the context of the changes to the prevailing system. The proliferation of hostilities across one and a half centuries presents however too unwieldy a study period to be encompassed in a single seamless chronological sweep. This is particularly the case at the regional level of enquiry where the diverse experiences of Scotland's maritime communities adds a further major variable. The solution has been to divide the 'war and peace' aspect of this study into three periods: 1651-1755, 1756-75 and 1776-91. These time divisions encompass three distinct phases in Scotland's participation in the evolving mercantilist trading system. Each study period has at least one major war during which the conflict factor was the principal catalyst for change.

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<sup>13</sup> The 'lack of coherence' between the differing schools and interest groups as been identified as the primarily reason why maritime studies invariably fails to deliver to its full potential, namely, as a microcosm of national history; N.A.M. Rodger, 'Britain', in J.B. Hattendorf (ed.), *The State of Naval and Maritime History* (Newport, 1994), pp. 45-58.



Even after the Union with England, the greatest maritime power in Europe, the Scottish fleet remains a clearly discernible entity within the British marine for the remainder of the century. Furthermore, prior to 1791, the numbers of Scottish vessels and masters in the customs categories (foreign, coastal and fisheries) are such as to be sufficiently manageable as to allow individual elements of the marine to be identified and their wartime experiences collated. This treatment is usually only possible for vessels and commanders of the Royal Navy, the East India Company and Greenland whalers. Through this analysis the pivotal role of a very small number of Scottish masters and their vessels in wartime, notably in the earlier periods, becomes apparent.



## CHAPTER I: SCOTTISH MARITIME AFFAIRS AT THE ADVENT OF THE MERCANTILIST ERA

England, with regally united Scotland in tow, was set on a collision course with her European rivals in trade after 1650.<sup>1</sup> The Navigation Act of that year targeted the Spanish for expulsion from the English colonial trade whilst the second Act (1651) further extended the exclusion of rival vessels to the domestic carrying trade of England and the fisheries. This more aggressive move was aimed squarely at the Dutch with the intention of provoking the first of the three Dutch Wars (1652-4).<sup>2</sup>

Scotland's membership of the English camp against the Dutch was effected without her consent. Indeed, the Navigation Act of 1651 was drafted as Monck's military subjugation of Scotland was being consolidated and hence anticipated the subsequent Union of Scotland and England. The inclusion of the Scots under the terms of the Act was implicit, as vessels 'that belong only to the people of this commonwealth and the plantations' had a right of entry to English plantation trades.<sup>3</sup> As it transpired Scotland was duly declared a full member of the Cromwellian Commonwealth by the Council in State (12 April 1654), too late to participate in the first assault on the Dutch marine.<sup>4</sup>

The Scottish marine was however hardly in a condition to respond to the opportunities created by the war at sea or to exploit the access to English trade gained by her membership of the Commonwealth. Monck's invasion had laid waste many of the seaports of the east coast of Scotland and a particularly severe winter that year,

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<sup>1</sup> The earlier Act of 1646 was a prototype and lacked the necessary rigour or means of enforcement.

<sup>2</sup> Analysis of the pressure groups is available in; J.E. Farnell, 'The Navigation Act of 1651, the First Dutch War, and the London Merchant Community', *Economic History Review* (1964), VXXVI, pp. 439-452.

<sup>3</sup> *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum*, I, p. 913, as quoted by E. Lipson, *The Economic History of England* (London, 1948), III, p. 123. A general view of the problems facing Scotland at this time is available in: G. Donaldson, *Scotland: James V - James VII* (Edinburgh, 1965). A more detailed analysis is available in T.M. Devine, 'The Cromwellian Union and the Scottish Burghs: The Case of Aberdeen and Glasgow, 1652-60' in J. Butt and J.T. Ward (eds.), *Scottish Themes* (Edinburgh, 1976), pp. 1-16.

<sup>4</sup> Chapter IV reviews the impact of the invasion on shipping activity in and out of the Scottish ports. Prior to 1654 wartime restrictions had been placed on Scottish communication with the colonies.



during which a great storm wrecked many vessels, compounded the losses already suffered by acts of war.<sup>5</sup> In the aftermath Cromwell's agent in Scotland, Thomas Tucker, undertook his *Report upon the settlement of Revenues of Excise Customs in Scotland A.D. 1656*. Part of that report was his much quoted 'doomsday' survey of the surviving stock of Scottish hulls that offers, when consolidated, a baseline for future comparisons.<sup>6</sup>

Table 1 .1 Estimates of Scottish Shipping by Customs Precinct 1656

Precinct	Number		Tonnage	
	Lowest	Highest	Lowest	Highest
1 Aberdeen	14	14	540	540
2 Ayr	10	11	203	208
3 Bo'ness	5	5	480	480
4 Dundee	22	22	874	874
5 Inverness	8	8	118	118
6 Kirkcaldy	50	50	1,741	1,741
7 Leith	12	13	800	1,300
8 Glasgow	18	20	1,020	1,045
Total	139	143	5,776	6,306

Source : T. Tucker, *Report upon the settlement of Revenues of Excise Customs in Scotland A.D. 1656*

This comprehensive survey of thirty ports, in eight customs precincts, found approximately 140 vessels, the majority located on the east coast. Their combined tonnage did not exceed 6,400 tons with the majority of vessels under 60 tons burthen. By contemporary English and European standards this marine was truly insignificant in all aspects and indicative of the retarded state of the Scottish economy.

The diminutive size of the Scottish marine did not however protect it from being targeted for exclusion by London merchants and shipmasters. Within a year of Tucker's

<sup>5</sup> J.D. Marwick (ed.), 'Report by Thomas Tucker upon the settlement of Revenues of Excise Customs in Scotland A.D. 1656', *Miscellany of the Scottish Burgh Records Society* (Edinburgh, 1881), pp. 1-48. The re-appraisal displayed in Table: 1.1 included the following adjustments to the original data: - a. the dry capacity burthen entries for Montrose (in lasts) and Orkney (in chaldrons) have been converted to a tons dead-weight measure; R.E. Zupro, 'The weights and measures of Scotland before the Union', *Scottish Historical Review* (1977), LVI, pp. 119 -145; b. the unspecified tonnage of listed coasters at Leith and Culross have each been awarded the average for their description and locality, i.e. 40 tons and 100 tons respectively. Appendix A offers a fuller discourse on the interpretation of tonnage measurements prior to 1791.

<sup>6</sup> *State Papers Domestic*, 1658-1659, pp. 7-10. Dutch masters and hulls regained a foothold in England's carrying trade as neutrals during the war with Spain.



report they were petitioning the Lord Protector and the Parliament of 1658 for a re-definition of the terms the 1651 Act. The eventual outcome of this highly emotive campaign was a new Navigation Act, passed in September 1660, by the first Parliament of the Restoration.<sup>7</sup> This Act decreed that the master and three-quarters of the crew had to be of English nationality. The explicit statement that only 'his Majesty's subjects of England, Ireland and his plantations are to be accounted English and no others' re-categorised the Scots as a 'foreign' nation, along with the Dutch. This exclusion of the Scots was not an oversight. Article XVI of the Act tacitly acknowledged the plight this legislation would cause the Scottish economy by making concessions on the direct importation of Scottish grain, salt and cured fish. The specified conditions were that this trade had to be carried in a Scottish-built hull and commanded by a Scottish captain and a crew three-quarters of whom were to be 'his Majesty's subjects'. As it was then common knowledge that the Scottish marine was then almost entirely foreign-built, such prohibitions and conditions were blatantly discriminatory; 'by which means our [Scottish] shipping is in a manner debarred from trading to England, because by their Act of Navigation our ships can import nothing but what is the produce of this Kingdom'.<sup>8</sup>

The Scottish Parliament retaliated with its own *Act for the Encouragement of Shipping and Navigation* (1661). This piece of legislation vainly sought to emulate the English model by ordering that only Scottish vessels were to carry all goods 'from the original places, whence they are in use first to be transported' with the far-sighted exceptions of imports from Asia, Africa, America, Muscovy and Italy. This stance was taken as a hostile act by the English Merchant Adventurer Companies who were then actively seeking royal charters from Charles to enshrine their monopolies in those areas of the world. Furthermore, the Scottish Navigation Act defined a 'Scottish' ship as one navigated by a crew of which three-quarters, as well as the master and owners, were of Scottish domicile. These conditions had to be verified by certificate under pain

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<sup>7</sup> *Act of Parliament of England*, 12 Chas. II, Cap 18 (1660), confirmed by 13 Chas. II, Stat. I, Cap 14.

<sup>8</sup> *Register of the Privy Council of Scotland [RPC]*, series iii, VII, p. 653.



of confiscation of the vessel.<sup>9</sup> The only tangible effect of this Act was however to encourage a few Dutch masters to seek naturalisation as Scottish burgesses.

Further extensions to the English Navigation Acts in 1662, 1663 (the Staple Act) and 1664, completed the Scots exclusion from the plantation trades. The first Act decreed that all trading must be in hulls built in the King's dominions (the Scottish fleet was then mostly foreign-built); while the last ordered that all European goods and manufacture destined for the colonies must pass through an English or Welsh port in an 'English' hull as prescribed by the Statutes. This Act was a new and heavy blow to Scottish trading aspirations which were already reeling from the introduction of the *Book of Rates* which increased English customs import duties on most Scottish goods.

The impending schism between the two trading nations, tied as they were by a common allegiance to the Stuart monarchy, prompted urgent diplomatic efforts to claim exemption for the Scots from alien status. The matter was first referred to a small *ad hoc* committee (July 1664) headed by Lord Lauderdale, then the Lord Treasurer. There it was argued that the favourable balance of trade that England enjoyed with Scotland could allow 'the admission of the Scotch' to the home market without prejudicing English trading interests or customs. This opinion was duly presented to the Council for Trade who proposed lowering the domestic market duties on a reciprocal basis. The Council however remained adamant that any such relaxation of trading restrictions should not concede access to the English plantations or encroach on Royal Chartered Companies' trade preserves.

The whole sovereignty issue was finally referred to a Royal Commission, set up in 1668, 'for settling the freedom of trade between the two countries'. Predictably, the Scottish Commissioners cited the Union of the Crowns (1603) as entitling the Scots to participate in the domestic carrying trade of England and her colonies but offered a

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<sup>9</sup> *Act of Parliament of Scotland*, VII, p. 257. Smout rightly draws attention to the significance of the omission of any requirement as to the origin of the hull, which underlines Scotland's dependence on purchasing foreign-built vessels at this time; *Scottish Trade*, p. 48.



working compromise. This was an assurance that should the Scots be re-admitted to the trade of England, all colonial commodities imported by Scottish vessels and not destined for consumption in Scotland would be passed through English ports in deference to the 1664 Act.

This proposal came too late to substantially change the hardening attitude within the vested interest groups of manufacturers and merchants. Only the year before, the English parliament had voted to renege on the inclusion of Irish shipping as 'English' under the original terms of the 1660 Act. In 1664, a new Statute forbade the exporting of anything other than 'horses and victuals' to the colonies by Irish traders and by inference, from receiving imported commodities directly from the colonies. This rigid interpretation of the English Navigation Acts was subsequently confirmed by a further Act in 1671 and remained in force until 1705 when a concession was made on the direct exporting of linen from Ireland. In between times Irish-Scottish trade suffered a further blow when an Act of Scottish Parliament (1703) re-established the prohibition on importing of Irish meal and livestock. This protective measure served the interest of the land-owners on the west coast of Scotland and hence remained on the Statute books for the next fifty years.

Such selective discrimination in trade was not wholly one way. The Scottish linen industry faced periodic bans from exporting to Ireland (1667 and 1704-5) and incurred an import duty until 1716-7. On balance however from 1707 until 1800 the west coast Scottish shippers would appear to have openly benefited from the general exclusion of Irish shippers from the British colonial trades and were able to exploit their geographic location to secure a sizeable share of the re-export market in colonial commodities to Ireland.<sup>10</sup> Such market opportunities were however largely unforeseen in 1668 when the Royal Commission on Anglo-Scottish trade affairs pronounced.

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<sup>10</sup> A review of trade policy is available in D. Woodward, 'Anglo-Scottish Trade and English commercial policy during the 1660s', *Scottish Historical Review* (1977), 56, no.162, pp. 153-176. The Irish-Scots trade relationship has been examined by L.E. Cochran, *Scottish Trade with Ireland in the Eighteenth Century* (Edinburgh, 1985), p. 9.



## **The maritime legacies from the Second (1664-7) and Third (1672-4) Dutch Wars**

By then, both the circumstances surrounding Anglo-Scottish maritime affairs and the condition of the Scottish fleets had quite dramatically improved since their nadir in 1656. With the Restoration and the resumption of war against the Dutch (1664) a common *esprit de corps* was struck up between the erstwhile rival marines while defending the King's domain during the Second and Third Dutch Wars. The immediate and tangible result of the direct involvement of Scottish privateering masters and vessels in these conflicts was a truly dramatic windfall of Dutch and French prizes. These were largely responsible for the marked increase in both the numbers and aggregate tonnage of Scottish owned vessels. Similarly, the Dutch Wars nurtured a small elite of masters experienced in long-haul cruising and skilled in the art of naval warfare that are worthy of individual note and attention as they later serve as the captains of guard ships and foreign-going armed traders in subsequent wars.

Less tangible, though more significant in the long run, was the legacy of judicial reforms stemming from these conflicts. These administrative and judicial reforms were crucial to the Scottish marine's future participation in the new international system of passes at sea which produced major dividends during the years of peace.

### **The successes of the Scottish privateers**

At first the new found patriotic fervour in the North for the prosecution of the King's war at sea against the Dutch was inhibited by the idiosyncrasies of the Scottish Admiral, then the heritable office of the Duke of Richmond and Lennox. His lengthy absence from Scotland and initial lack of interest resulted in only three privateering commissions being issued by the spring of 1666.<sup>11</sup> This bureaucratic *impasse* was

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<sup>11</sup> *RPC*, II, pp. 152-175. This hereditary office has been reviewed by A.R.G. McMillan, 'Admiralty Patronage in Scotland 1702-1705', *Juridical Review* (1938), pp. 81-6.



resolved, without loss of face, when the Scottish Privy Council undertook the necessary administration in his name. In this way, some twenty-five commissions were issued during the three months of April, June and July. By then, the early successes of two captains, Gideon Murray on the *Thistle* and William Hamilton on the *Roths* (both commissioned 5 April 1666), had fuelled a short but intense public mania for privateering:

the people of Leith and Edinburgh are very hearty and zealous for the service of his Majesty in this war with the Dutch and the French and a general rendezvous is appointed in this city for the putting into a positive way as may be most appropriate for the publick good.<sup>12</sup>

During the course of war over sixty Scottish vessels, a sizeable proportion of the Scottish marine at this time, sailed with a letter of marque commission.<sup>13</sup> It is however highly likely that the majority of these vessels were armed traders rather than dedicated privateers. Indeed, the relatively high outlay required to fit out a small vessel as a cruising privateer prohibited most owners from speculating in such ventures. For those that did most of the outlay went on victualling and equipping a large crew armed for fighting at close quarters. Cannons on Scottish privateers at that time were generally of very small calibre - often one-pound shot swivel guns - and ineffective at range and so prizes were secured by closing and boarding. The *George* 'frigatto' of Glasgow (60 tons) provides a good example of the stores and armaments of a privateer of the period. She departed with provisions for six months for her crew of sixty men, who were heavily armed for boarding with thirty-two muskets, twelve half-pikes, eighteen pole-axes, and thirty swords. By way of contrast she carried only three barrels of gunpowder for her five cannons on this extended cruise.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> *London Gazette*, Edinburgh Report, 7 July 1666.

<sup>13</sup> Glasgow City Archives [GCA], Maxwell of Pollock MSS T-PM 107/7/20/4 & RPC.

<sup>14</sup> J. Pagan, *Sketches of the History of Glasgow* (Glasgow, 1847), p. 77.



On the west coast the highly speculative venture of sending out a privateer attracted a select group of local merchant burgesses and landed gentry. The promoters of the *George* numbered sixteen led by Provost William Anderson of Dowhill, John Walkinshaw and Sir George Maxwell of Newark. On the east coast, the nobility would appear to have taken the lead. For example, the *Bruce* 'friggato' of Pittenweem (size unknown) was owned by Charles, Earl of Haddington, Sir William Bruce of Kinross, Sir James Stanfield of Newmilns, Sir Robert Baird of Saughton Hall, Mr John Dempster of Pitliver and Mr Thomas Stewart of Blair.<sup>15</sup>

During the Second Dutch War the expectation of a quick and exceptional return on their investment was, at first, fully justified. The rate of capture by Scottish privateers, cruising as far a field as the Spanish and Norwegian coasts, quickly reach a peak in August 1666; 'nor are our privateers wanting to make the Hollanders sensible of the war, having brought in here nine prizes in eight days to or about Leith and many more expected daily besides six or eight more we are informed are taken about Brasse Sound in Jutland.'<sup>16</sup> In the seventeen months between April 1666 and August 1667 successive reports in the *London Gazette* recounted to its mainly southern readership, as a matter of national pride, the exploits of a dedicated core of around twenty Scottish privateers. These reports listed at least 108 Dutch, French and Danish prizes brought into the east coast ports of Scotland which, apparently, vied for the business.<sup>17</sup> This tally was approximately a fifth of that taken by their English counterparts for that war (552 vessels) and was a remarkable achievement for such a small number of masters.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid and SRO, Bruce of Kinross MSS, GD 29/46/8 and 29/48. The Court of Session handed down judgement on two of her prizes brought into Cromarty Roads in 19 February 1673. Sir William Bruce was obliged to attend the London Admiralty concerning the matter of compensation as late as 21 June 1684. He may well also have held shares in the privateer *Wemyss* of Burntisland as the same missive collection includes a Cromarty Vice-Admiralty decree condemning her prize; GD 29/43.

<sup>16</sup> *London Gazette*, Leith Report, 21 August 1666.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, successive reports 1666-7.

<sup>18</sup> Professor Davis calculated that over the three Dutch wars the number of prizes captured by English vessels totalled c.2,000 - 2,700, at a loss of 500 to its own marine; R. Davis, *The Rise of the English Shipping Industry* (London, 1962), p. 51.



The impact of such an influx of prize hulls into the Scottish marine over the following decades can hardly be overstated. Though only a quarter of the prize reports in the *London Gazette* incidentally mention the tonnage of the captured vessel taken into a Scottish port during the Second Dutch War, their combined tonnage amounted to c.6,150 tons. This figure virtually matches the tonnage of the entire Scottish marine surveyed by Tucker ten years earlier. The value and size of the prizes and their cargoes was equally impressive. Heading the list were: a Dutch East Indiamen (900 tons) carrying silks; an Archangel trader (400 tons) with potash, 'turkey leather' and furs of great value and; the *ex-HMS Convertine* (58 guns).<sup>19</sup> These were in addition to: four hulls over 400 tons; six over 300 tons; five over 200 tons and ten over 100 tons burthen and their cargoes.<sup>20</sup>

The easy pickings were however rapidly coming to an end. By the spring of 1667 the Scottish privateers started to encountering a more resolute enemy. In one incident the most active flotilla - comprising of the *Bruce* (John Acheson), the *Roths*, (William Hamilton) and the *Lamb* (John Brown[e]) - was brought to action by a Dutch man-of-war from which they only just managed to extricate themselves. The *Lamb* was reported to have been so badly holed along the water line in the engagement that Browne was forced to transfer his crew to a prize.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, on their return to Leith, Hamilton's hard won prize sunk in the mouth of the harbour.<sup>22</sup> This was not an isolated incident, Gideon Murray on the *Thistle* was forced to disengage having received a similar mauling from two large Dutchmen.<sup>23</sup> One unnamed Scottish privateer (22 guns) was less fortunate and was sunk having refused to surrender to a man-of-war.

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<sup>19</sup> The cargoes noted were a fair cross section of the European north-south trade and included Iberian wine, nuts, treacle and citrus fruits. Not all was sold on the Scottish market. The customs records for Newcastle during the customs year 1665-6 included Scottish imports of 76 tons of French wine and 545 cwt. of brown sugar taken from Dutch prizes; Woodward, 'Anglo-Scottish Trade', p.156.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, supplemented by M. Wood (ed.), *Extracts from the Records of the Burgh of Edinburgh* (London 1950) as quoted by S. Mowat, *The Port of Leith* (Edinburgh, 1994), p. 214.

<sup>21</sup> *London Gazette*, Leith Report, 13 April 1667.

<sup>22</sup> Wood, *Extracts of the Burgh of Edinburgh*, p. 32.

<sup>23</sup> *London Gazette*, Leith Report, 9 April 1667.



Likewise, two prizes taken by 'Scots companies' cruising off Galicia were retaken by a warship (40 guns).<sup>24</sup>

The Dutch offensive also carried the war back to the east coast of Scotland. On 30 April 1667 a Dutch naval expedition in excess of thirty men-of-war appeared off Leith intent on wreaking havoc and retribution on the ports of the Forth. In the midst of the panic that ensued onshore, Leith looked to its meagre and neglected defences. As fate would have it, the sunken wreck of Hamilton's prize probably did as much as the chain boom strung across the harbour mouth to keep out the fire-ship sent in by the Dutch. Three warships of the Stuart navy, then in the upper Forth, prudently kept away until such times as a southerly wind took the Dutch fleet across to the opposing Fife shore where they attempted to bombard Burntisland. This scheme was also foiled as a company of the local privateering captains managed to un-ship their cannon in time to mount a defensive shore battery. After a feeble exchange of shot the Dutch abandoned the entire project and stood out to sea sailing north, belatedly chased by the Royal Naval squadron under the command of Sir Jeremy Sands.<sup>25</sup>

The Dutch never again returned in force and by June of that year the balance had fully swung back in favour of the Scots privateers; 'of late scarcely a day has come passed in which there has been two or three prizes sent in, so much that the harbour [at Montrose] is so thronged that they are forced to send several of them to other places.'<sup>26</sup> It was however a short lived revival as hostilities were concluded in August of that year.

Throughout the first two Dutch wars the Scottish merchant marine suffered only negligible losses as very few Dutch privateers ventured into Scottish waters. This situation was directly the result of the official ban on manning Dutch privateers whilst the Dutch navy remained short of skilled seaman. This edict was re-instituted every summer from 1665 onwards and only relaxed in the winter months. For those Dutch

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid, two reports, 19 May 1667.

<sup>25</sup> Mowat utilizes the *Extracts of the Burgh of Edinburgh* in her coverage of the military preparations and civil panic caused by this visitation; *Port of Leith*, pp. 214-5.

<sup>26</sup> *London Gazette*, Montrose Report, 26 June 1667.



privateers that did sail, the prize opportunities presented by the diminutive Scottish marine probably discouraged forays so far north and into such hazardous waters.<sup>27</sup> Luck would also seem to favour the Scots. Their one major loss - the *Glasgow* (300 tons) - was subsequently re-captured from the prize crew by her own sailors in a daring episode and brought back safely to the Clyde.<sup>28</sup>

### **The alignment of Scottish prize law and procedures with English and Continental practice**

By the end of the Second Dutch War however both the political and judicial climate had changed dramatically. Charles II had become highly concerned at the diplomatic repercussions of the rough handling of neutrals in the North Sea by Scottish privateers. Furthermore, during the heady days of 1666-7, the condemnation of a neutral vessel and cargo as prize was virtually assured at the notorious Vice-Admiralty Court at Cromarty. As Lord Stair later recalled, the rules of evidence accepted in this outpost of Scottish justice were farcical:

it was alleged that the confession of the ship's company, taken by the Admiral Depute at Cromartie, was extorted by holding swords and pistols to the breasts or that famine was so extorted at sea when they were taken, it was found sufficient to enervat their testimonies.<sup>29</sup>

Such a wanton disregard for the legal process was symptomatic of the general disrepute into which the office of the Lord High Admiral of Scotland had lapsed under Lennox. His only serious interest would seem to have been to encourage inflated valuations of prizes brought in for condemnation so as to enhance his tenth share as Admiral.

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<sup>27</sup> The few that did cruise in Scottish waters had such terror-invoking names as the *Mother and Virgins* and the *Provoked Cheese maker* (names used by a number of hulls); J.R. Bruijn, 'Dutch Privateering during the Second and Third Dutch Wars', *Course et Piraterie*, papers to the 15th Conference of the Commission Internationale d'Histoire Maritime (San Francisco, 1975), II, p.415.

<sup>28</sup> *London Gazette*, Glasgow Report, 5 February 1667.

<sup>29</sup> Sir James Dalrymple of Stair, *Institutions of the Law of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1681), p. 218.



At the outbreak of the Third Dutch War in March 1672 (with France now an ally) Charles made his displeasure known to the Scottish Privy Council. As a consequence they placed obstructions in the way of the Scottish privateering masters returning to sea. This was achieved by refusing new privateering commissions and issuing, when presented directly to the Lord Chancellor, only a single voyage extension to the holders of old commissions. Furthermore, all outstanding and future prize matters were to be referred to the Judge Admiral of Scotland sitting in the Court of Session at Edinburgh. In response, two of the most active privateering masters, Bennet and Browne, got up a petition to the Scottish Privy Council (July 1672) denouncing this deliberate policy of legal obstruction which kept them from the sea; 'seeing that the petitioners are put to vast charges and expense to outreicking of their several frigates and furnishing the same with soldiers, mariners and provisions'.<sup>30</sup> They also expressed grave concern over the number of judgements handed down against the Scottish privateer by the new judicial process which reinstating the captured vessel to its rightful owners with costs. Despite these obstructions it is plainly evident, from the large number of prize cases relating to this short conflict, that privateering activity was aggressively pursued by Scottish masters.<sup>31</sup>

The timely death of Lennox (April 1673) presented Charles II with the ideal opportunity to bring Scottish maritime affairs within more immediate control. To this end he appointed of his brother James, then Duke of York and Albany and one time Lord High Admiral of England, to the vacant office of the Lord High Admiral of Scotland.<sup>32</sup> Whilst York consolidated his new position, Charles directly instructed the

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<sup>30</sup> *RPC*, IV, p. 555.

<sup>31</sup> Ninety-one prize cases, heard between 4 May 1672 and 10 January 1673, was noted by Judge Robert Hodson Cay, 'List of Prize Question Tried in the High Court of Admiralty in Scotland' (1806) PRO, *Treasury In-letter*, T.1. 973 (3131); as quoted in T. Baty, 'The Judge Admiral of Scotland', *Juridical Review* (1954), pp.146-7. Mowat's recent review of the Registers of Decrees (SRO AC7) has found an even higher number; viz., 109 prizes taken by Scottish privateers in 1672.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 30 and 42. James, Duke of York and Albany, was the last Lord High Admiral of Scotland to receive this office by letters patent. Only the month before Warren (the principal contractor for masts in the Baltic for the English navy) had written to London about two Gothenburg masts ships taken by Scots privateers and '... against all right and reason condemned'; R.G. Albion, 'Forests and Sea Power', *Harvard Economic Studies* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1926), No.29, p. 223.



Scottish Privy Council (in June) to enforce strict observance of the six main English prize rules. These were publicly displayed at Edinburgh 'Mercat Crose' and the 'Custome House' at Leith and filled the legal vacuum in Scottish prize law until peace was proclaimed in February 1674.<sup>33</sup> Even with the end of hostilities, the Judge Admirals sitting at Edinburgh (answerable to York) continued in their task of establishing the new legal precedents in Scottish Prize Law which would redress the legal excesses of the last Dutch War. This was, understandably, a ponderous process. and the last ruling was not handed down until June 1680 as 'there have been many questions as to the rights and Interests of Allies and Newters, very fully and accurately debated...for the clearing of the important points that occur in these controversies and for vindicating of the publick justice of the Kingdom.'<sup>34</sup> Shortly afterwards the precedent-making cases were collated and published by the President of the Court of Session, Lord Stair, as a part of his seminal work *Institutions of the Law of Scotland* (1681).<sup>35</sup> This new corpus finally placed Scottish Prize Law in line with English and Continental codes of practice. This was an essential development if Scots Law were to comply with new international maritime order established by the Treaty of Breda (1668) and the Anglo-Dutch Maritime Treaty (1674). Treaties that ended this series of wars and created a new British-Dutch understanding which lasted until the outbreak of the American War of Independence (1776).

### **The influence of the 'bullionist' and 'ballance of trade' schools of political economic thought on Scottish mercantilist policy**

Whilst Scottish jurists moved slowly towards the international consensus as to what constituted the 'Law of Nations' at sea, the same spirit of reasoned enquiry inspired

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<sup>33</sup> *RPC*, IV, pp. 69-71.

<sup>34</sup> Stair, *Institutions*, p. 213.

<sup>35</sup> Further analysis available in: E.J. Graham, 'The Scottish Marine in the Dutch Wars', *Scottish Historical Review* (1982), LXI, no. 171, pp. 72-3.



moves to unlock the prosperity of the nation. The formulation of Scotland's national trade policies had, since the Union of the Crowns (1603), been primarily the concern of the Scottish Privy Council. In 1663 however the Scottish Convention of Royal Burghs embraced the 'bullionist' crude remedy for Scotland's chronic shortage of specie within the domestic economy by imposing an embargo on the exportation of specie to pay for imports; the only exceptions being payment for essential purchases of Norwegian timber and, in famine years, grain from the Baltic. This embargo had however the undesirable effect of stifling the Scottish shippers entry into the rapidly expanding north-south European trades.<sup>36</sup>

The Order in Council of 1670, on the other hand, tacitly acknowledged the influence of the more sophisticated arguments of Thomas Munn and 'the ballance of trade' school. This edict attempted to redress Scotland adverse balance of payments by freeing the small Scottish herring industry from all export duties while re-introducing the embargo (previously imposed in 1667) on the importing of Irish cattle and victuals. The latter was brutally enforced in July 1672 with the violent capture of an Irish 'bark' carrying meal off Arran in the Firth of Clyde resulting in dead and wounded amongst the Irish crew.<sup>37</sup> After 1674 however such tactics were moderated and re-directed against the property of the offenders with the seizure of cargoes and the burning of any Irish boats found in Scottish west coast ports.<sup>38</sup>

As it transpired, the benefits of these initiatives were short-lived. The fishing industry initially responded with a significant increase in barrels exported before royal edicts claiming to conserve the inshore fish stocks of the firths, limited the scale of expansion. Charles II was then actively investigating the prospects of selling company patents for the fisheries.<sup>39</sup> It must however be conceded that the local expertise did not

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<sup>36</sup> The most acclaimed 'bullionist' tract, *A discourse of the Common Weal[th] of this Realm of England*, was published in Edinburgh in 1549 (and reprinted 1581).

<sup>37</sup> *RPC*, III, p. 592.

<sup>38</sup> For example, orders were sent in 1674 to Robert Kennoway, Lord Cochrane and Collector for the Clyde respectively, *Ibid*, II, pp. 552 and 592; also order to seize Irish meal boat at Ayr from which the food was to be given to the poor and boat to be sold by roup, *ibid*, IV, pp. 132 and 148.

<sup>39</sup> Smout, *Scottish Trade*, p. 222.



then exist at this time to match the Dutch in either the techniques of off-shore catching or the curing of herring. Similarly, the enforcement of the embargo on Irish imports by the sequestration of their small open boats, only raised a temporary barrier to Irish imports before it was resumed as a contraband trade, with the collusion of local officials, through Galloway and Argyllshire.<sup>40</sup> At worst this embargo simply denied the Irish the means to purchase Scottish exports - an elementary lesson in the benefits of reciprocity in trade that was not understood until Queen Anne's time.

### **The supervision of overseas trading during the 1670s and 80s**

The state of the Scottish shipping industry inherited by the Duke of York on his arrival to take up his office as High Lord Admiral of Scotland, reflected the nation's position as an under-developed region on the peripheral of the Atlantic and European trade. In the thirty years since their introduction, the English Navigation Acts had effectively marginalised the presence of the Scottish marine in the emerging Atlantic trades. Furthermore, the other major maritime powers, following England's lead, were moving towards a protectionist stance with the trade of their colonies. Thereby the Scots acquired the status of aliens in most of the New World.

The European markets, on the other hand, were open to the Scottish shippers. During the 1670s the favourable market conditions created by Charles II's policy of neutrality in a warring Europe actively encouraged them to venture further afield. The southern European trades offered the best prospect for high value-added trading as Scottish barrelled fish was readily exchanged for salt, spirits, wine, nuts and citrus fruits. On the west coast the irrepressible Glasgow entrepreneur Walter Gibson made

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<sup>40</sup> For example warrants were issued after the lapse of the temporary licence of 1675 against merchants caught still importing Irish victuals. Amongst them was Provost Graham of Dumfries who was arrested along with the tidewater at Portpatrick and other accomplices on charges of importing c.100 Irish cattle and oxen. In the Firth of Clyde area over twenty warrants were issued for colluding with Irish smugglers. The outcome was that the tidewater at Ayr went into hiding in Ireland, four soldiers at Dumbarton Castle were cashiered and a number of burgesses of Glasgow and Renfrew fined; *RPC*, IV, pp. 453, 582-3 and V, pp. 55, 99, 101-2.



enough profit on his venture out to St Martin, on the Ile de Re (off La Rochelle), with 300 lasts of Clyde herrings out and brandy back, to purchase his chartered Dutchman - the *St Agate* (450 tons) - and two other smaller vessels.<sup>41</sup>

The high prices commanded on the home market by such return cargoes reflected the high risk of capture by corsairs in the southern approaches to the British Isles and the Bay of Biscay. Around this time the absence of an effective French naval presence in the latter sea area allowed the Barbary coast galleys (often manned by renegade Christians) to penetrate as far north as southern Ireland and the Scilly Isles. Successive reports to the Scottish Privy Council attest to losses suffered at their hands by Scottish traders venturing into these waters. In March 1671 the *Golden Salmond* of Glasgow, owned by a consortium headed by Provost William Anderson of Dowhill, was taken *en route* to Cadiz by a 'salleeman' man-of-war.<sup>42</sup> Undeterred by this loss, a further group of Glasgow entrepreneurs, led by Provost John Bell, applied the following year for a new 'Turk' (Mediterranean) pass for the *Providence* (48 guns). She returned unscathed and is credited as the first ship to directly import Spanish sherry sack to Glasgow.<sup>43</sup> In 1675 the crew of the *Mary* of Inverkeithing were not so fortunate and were carried by 'turks' into slavery.<sup>44</sup> In the summer of 1676 the crew of the *William and Jean* of Glasgow had the relative good fortune to retake their vessel from the Algerine prize crew put onboard after their capture *en route* from Port Glasgow to Cadiz. Their hopes of a safe passage home soured when a boarding party from a passing Portuguese frigate exploited the presence of the disarmed prize crew of 'Turks' to declare the vessel prize and carry her into Lisbon.<sup>45</sup> In September of that year the *Isabel* of Montrose was carried into Tangiers while returning home from La Rochelle.<sup>46</sup> Sometime before July 1678 the *Anna* of Pittenween was taken and the crew imprisoned

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<sup>41</sup> J. McUre, *The History of Glasgow* (Glasgow, 1736, reprinted 1830), p. 169.

<sup>42</sup> *RPC*, II, p. 574.

<sup>43</sup> McUre, *History of Glasgow*, p. 170

<sup>44</sup> *RPC*, IV, p. 489.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, V, p. 59.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, V, p. 281.



on the same route whilst in the company of three English vessels.<sup>47</sup> These incidents, while involving small losses of vessels and men by English standards, represented a significant reduction to the diminutive stock of Scottish sea-going hulls and a serious drain on the pool of experienced mariners.

The fate of the unfortunate Scottish crews taken captive demonstrates, yet again, how inferior Scottish maritime prowess and institutions were at this time. Scotland, as an independent nation state, did not have the naval force to emulate Admiral Blake's bombardment of Algiers and Tunis (1654) or the diplomatic leverage to secure the release of her nationals from the horrors of captivity. Neither did Scotland levy an equivalent to the English 'Algerine Duty' on vessels entering her ports to fund ransoming *en masse*.<sup>48</sup> The ransoming of Scottish crews was therefore left to the charity of their kinsman at home. This involved a costly and fickle process that often took years to collect the substantial amounts involved in ransoming an ordinary seaman.<sup>49</sup> The method of collection involved direct appeals to the principal city corporations whilst agents, authorised by the Scottish Privy Council, toured the maritime parishes touching the Christian conscience of their congregations.<sup>50</sup>

### **Scottish compliance with the new international order at sea**

Such a unsatisfactory state of affairs was not allowed to continue, especially where they impinged on the grander schemes of the monarch. In December 1676 York assumed the exclusive right to issue foreign-going passes to Scottish masters thereby

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid, VI, p. 288.

<sup>48</sup> In 1641 the English Parliament set aside a percentage of all customs duty to redeem captives. Such ransoming *en masse* was organised by intermediaries, usually the Order of Redemptionist Fathers. In the first 'redemption' (1646) Elizabeth Mancor of Dundee was ransomed for £200 and Alice Hayes of Edinburgh for £1,100 sterling; S. Clissold, 'The Ransom Business', *History Today*, XXVI, No.12, p. 787.

<sup>49</sup> The ransom for Walter Noble, one of the crew of the *Golden Salmond*, was set at 400 pieces of eight; *RPC*, IV, p. 113. He was eventually released and served as master on a succession of Clyde vessels including the *Mayflower* of Glasgow which crossed to the 'Caribees' in March 1685; SRO E72 19/1/8/9. In August 1672

<sup>50</sup> Eight wives of crewmen from this vessel lodged a petition protesting against the delay by the collectors in amassing the ransom for two men; *RPC*, VI, pp. 573 and 364.



taking full control of Scotland's overseas trade. During the Barbary corsair emergency of the following year, he went so far as to temporarily place the issuing of 'Mediterranean passes' to Scottish traders in the hands of the English Admiralty.<sup>51</sup> This move may have been designed to include them under the protection of English agreements with the Barbary States. More likely it was his need to curtail their potential to create undesirable diplomatic incidents abroad (as the English Admiralty only issued passes to 'British-built' vessels) at a time when an international agreement on a safe conduct system was being concluded. As part of the general peace accord that followed the Treaty of Nijmegen (July 1678), which concluded the Dutch Wars, a comprehensive pass system was inaugurated that guaranteed vessels voyaging abroad protection from seizure or harassment. This was the first practical dividend of the new consensus on the Law of Nations at sea.<sup>52</sup> This new order in international co-operation brought to an end the worst excesses of the early mercantilist system in European and western Mediterranean waters.

The issuing of these indispensable foreign-going passes to Scottish traders was placed under the direction of a new Scottish civil office - the 'General Surveyor'.<sup>53</sup> To facilitate trade Scotland was divided into three administrative districts: the Lowlands, the North and the Isles, served by issuing offices at Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Lerwick respectively. The new system required separate passes for each leg of a passage and were valid for a year and a day. After that time the messengers-at-arms were empowered by 'Letters of Horning' to secure old passes so that 'they do not abuse for covering of foreigne trade or otherwayes therby'.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid, V, p. 52.

<sup>52</sup> England had gone on the offensive against the Tripoli corsairs. British naval boats under the command of Clowdisley Shovell burned craft found in Tripoli harbour (1676) and cruised the Barbary coast (1677-86). The signatories were Spain, Holland, Sweden, Denmark and the corsair states (Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli). In addition Spanish and Dutch passes were also deemed valid against French privateers.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, p.217. The first of whom was Hugh Dalrymple, son of Lord Stair.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, V, pp. 135-6, 217 and 442. An example of an Mediterranean pass via Campvere was that issued for the *Margaret* of Aberdeen, Captain Thomas Gordon, (1692); *State Papers* (Scotland) Warrant Books, V XV, No.334.



## The establishment of the central authority of the Lord High Admiral of Scotland

Such treaties and advances in international maritime co-operation served to highlight the general disregard in which the authority of the Lord High Admiral of Scotland and his officials was held. In the more isolated waters of the outer and western isles, open warfare occasionally flared between rival foreign marines in contempt of Scottish sovereignty.<sup>55</sup> General lawlessness and acts of piracy were also regularly perpetrated by and against the local communities, with judicial retribution rarely seen to be exacted on the transgressors.<sup>56</sup> It was therefore a matter of urgency that the Duke of York restore the tarnished credibility of the office of Lord High Admiral of Scotland.

In 1680 the Scottish Privy Council, no doubt at his behest, re-affirmed the independent and supreme authority of the Lord High Admiral, 'it being certain that the Admirall has not only a civill jurisdiction but a supream jurisdiction ane *imperium merum* for judgeing and punishing all thefts, roberies and other crymes committed at sea or within the seamarke'.<sup>57</sup> The following year his new marine judicial system was enshrined in a Statute of the Scottish Parliament which effectively stripped the Vice-Admiralties of their power to hear and condemn prizes. These matters were now deemed to be the sole prerogative of the Judge-Admiral sitting at the Court of Admiralty at Edinburgh as the Statute 'Prohibit[ed] and Discharge[d] all other Judges to meddle with the decision of the said causes in the first instance, except the Great Admiral or his Deputes allenarly'.<sup>58</sup>

In the international arena the Lord High Admiral of Scotland was seen to hold firm on the issue of Scottish sovereignty. The *cause célèbre* was the case of John

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<sup>55</sup> Prior to the Act of Union, engagements between Spanish, Dutch and French squadrons repeatedly occurred in the waters of the Outer Isles. In one incident (1640) four Dutch naval escorts to the incoming East Indies fleet were overwhelmed in Shetland waters by ten Spanish privateering frigates fitted-out at Dunkirk for this mission.

<sup>56</sup> Major expeditions against pirates nests were mounted by the Convention of the Royal Burghs in the Firth of Clyde (1590 and 1643) and the Western Isles (1610). The occasional execution of pirates captured in Orkney waters continued until at least 1725; SRO, Morton MSS, GD 150, box 136.

<sup>57</sup> *RPC*, VI, pp. 535-6.

<sup>58</sup> Scots Statute, 1681 as quoted by Baty 'Judge Admiral' from the 'Memorial for the Judge Admiral of Scotland, 1802', PRO T.1/901 *Treasury In Letter*.



Niven, master of the *Fortune* of London, who had absconded with his French cargo while *en route* from La Rochelle to Ostend. When he resurfaced in Burntisland he was imprisoned in the local tollbooth on a holding charge of 'crimes against the personage of the Lord High Admiral of Scotland' while the question of jurisdiction was decided. The French laid claim to ultimate jurisdiction in what was, as they perceived it, an act of piracy. Failing that, they pressed for a 'paine of death' penalty through the Scottish courts. York rejected both demands and had Nevin prosecuted for sedition and breach of contract in the Scottish Court of Admiralty having first pardoned him for slander.<sup>59</sup>

The establishment of the Law of Nations in Scottish and western European waters did not however extend to zones in the Mediterranean where elements of the Barbary corsairs and the Sultan's navy regularly broke agreements. The experience of the Scottish vessel - *Turkie* 'frigote' - serves as an example. She was taken on her return passage from Leghorn, in 1681, by six Turkish men-of-war sailing under the French flag. It was a bloody engagement during which the captain and several of the crew were killed and the survivors carried off to enslavement in Algiers.<sup>60</sup>

Given such a volatile state of affairs in that sea region, it is understandable that John Dunlop, a Scottish merchant in London, pressed his brother William to secure personal insurance against ransom before sailing for Cadiz - with the intention of carrying on to Venice. John quoted in his letter 'six guineas per £100 [as] the usual rate on a passage for the Straits [of Gibraltar]' but did not offer a rate for the highly dangerous second leg to Venice.<sup>61</sup> William sailed in September 1682 on the *Londoner* (22 guns) in the company of two other armed English merchant men (36 & 16 guns) 'so they need not fear no Salee man'.<sup>62</sup> By then however an new armistice had been agreed between the British Crown and the Ambassador of the 'Emperor of Morocco' which

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<sup>59</sup> For the progress of this long running case; see *RPC*, VI, pp. 439, 440, 452, 520, 535 and 536.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*, IV, p. 582 and VI, p. 190.

<sup>61</sup> Letter to father in Glasgow, 9 September 1682. William had just completed his training in 'ciphering, writing and book holding' in Rotterdam; GCA, Dunlop of Garnkirk MSS, 120 D12/11.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*, D12/15 and 16.



greatly reduced the threat from the Barbary coast corsairs in Biscayan and Iberian waters - for the time being.<sup>63</sup>

Such dangers were, of course, only one of a number of factors that actively encouraged young Scottish merchant adventurers to look to the Americas rather than the Mediterranean or the Levant when seeking their fortunes. The subsequent actions of William Dunlop typify this westward shift in outlook as he aborted his planned trip to Venice and took passage instead on the West Indiaman *Endeavour* (200 tons). His first port of call was New York, a place where 'he has not heard of any hurricanes there, nor is the hazard of pirates great'. From there, armed with letters of introduction and credit and using the Scottish network abroad, he made his way to Curacao and Jamaica before his untimely death at Port Royal in November 1683.<sup>64</sup> The fact that all of Dunlop's passages were made on English vessels and that he communicated his news with Scotland via England, points to the general effectiveness of the English Navigation Acts at this time.

The progress of William Dunlop also demonstrates the accommodation secured by the Anglo-Scottish Commission of 1668 which allowed Scottish merchants to settle and trade in the English colonies. This august body did not however gain any concessions on the crucial issue of the exclusion of Scottish vessels and ports from the direct carrying trade to and from the colonies and plantations.

### **The early Scottish Atlantic traders**

The Clyde masters had attempted to establish a direct trade with the Caribbean isles, prior to and during the Cromwellian Commonwealth. As Tucker's report (1656) acknowledged, 'here hath likewise beene some who have adventured as farre as the Barbadoes; but the losse they have sustayned by reason of theyr going out and comeing

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid, D 12/29.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, D 12/36, 41 and 6/25.



home late every yeare, have made them discontinue goeing thither any more.'<sup>65</sup> Sometime around the mid 1640s, the *James* of Ayr had returned with 'a stock of tobacco newly come fra the Isle of Barbados worth £1533. 6/8d' belonging to the Ayr burgess William Kelso. In 1646 the *Bonadventur* of Irvine had been sent to the island of St. Christopher to retrieve the merchant stock of another deceased burgess of Ayr, Andrew Rolland. A year later the *Antelope* of Glasgow returned to the Clyde with 20,000 lb. of French Martinique tobacco. In 1655 the *Gift [of God]* of Ayr was reported safely reaching Barbados.<sup>66</sup>

Following the Restoration, the 1660 English Navigation Act re-affirmed the exclusion of Scottish vessels and ports from the carrying trade of the colonies. There remained however a loophole whereby Scots traders could enter an English colonial port directly from a Scottish port - by transporting felons, political prisoners or bonded servants. In January 1663, Lord Lauderdale, then Secretary of State for Scotland and confidante of Charles II, set the precedent by granting to John Browne, the Scottish merchant and master mariner, a licence to trade with four vessels to the Americas.<sup>67</sup> This was probably in response to a request made the previous year by the Edinburgh magistrates to be allowed to transport undesirables directly to the colonies. From 1666 onwards a number of Leith vessels were licensed to transport felons to Virginia or Barbados.<sup>68</sup>

While the Royal Commission of 1668 on Anglo-Scottish affairs deliberated, Scottish aspirations to enter the plantation trades found a champion in the Duke of York who was then the High Lord Admiral of England. Using his personal influence and

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<sup>65</sup> As quoted by Marwick, *Miscellany*, p. 26.

<sup>66</sup> For the voyages of *James* and *Bonadventur*; A. Dunlop, *The Royal Burgh of Ayr* (Edinburgh, 1953), p. 198. For the voyage of the *Gift of God*; 'Minutes of the Council of Barbados', dated 1 August 1655 as quoted by D. Dobson, *The Mariners of the Clyde and Western Scotland* (St. Andrew, 1994), p. 17.

<sup>67</sup> BL, MSS 35126, licence 16 January 1662/3.

<sup>68</sup> The first to Virginia with convicts would seem to have been the *Phoenix* of Leith; Wood, *Extracts of the Burgh of Edinburgh*, entry 25 April 1666 - and the *Job* of Leith which return in March 1667; Mowat, *Leith*, p. 220. The *Elizabeth* of Leith left in July 1667 with a consignment of criminals for Barbados; *RPC*, II, p. 358. The most regular was the *Ewe and Lamb* 1666-72 while the largest was the prize and ex-warship *Convertine* chosen to remove to Virginia (1668) the remaining Covenanters held in Grey Friars churchyard; Mowat, *Leith*, p.216-7.



authority he proposed a Scottish plantation and entrepot at New York as a channel for Scottish enterprise. His motives were not entirely selfless as he held the royal patent for this newly acquired English colony (the ex-Dutch colony of New Amsterdam). Under his scheme Scottish entrepreneurs, 'in Vessels from Scotland', were encouraged 'to pass from Scotland to New York with such persons of the Scots Nation as shall desire to plant there, and to trade between the said places as they shall have occasion. Or remain at New York upon the account of the fisheries.'<sup>69</sup>

In May 1669 an Order of Council authorised the Duke of York to licence the first Scottish vessels under this scheme, these were two Leith hulls - the *James* (150 tons) and the *Hope* (350 tons). To ensure the original concept of promoting a Scottish settlement was achieved the Council imposed the condition that at least four hundred Scottish subjects were conveyed on their first voyage. This onerous requirement was probably the reason why the owners of the *James* appear not to have taken up their licence. The owners of the *Hope*, on the other hand, persisted and petitioned the Scottish Privy Council to instruct all Sheriffs and Justices of the Peace to deliver to them 'strong and idle beggars, vagabonds, Egyptians [gypsies], comon and notorious whores, theeves and other dissolute and louse persons banished or stigmatised for gross crymes'.<sup>70</sup> While this human cargo was being assembled a further Order in Council (June) further extended access to the English colonial market with the addition of the clause, 'or any other of His Majesty's plantation's in America'. This new privilege was granted under certain conditions first mooted by the Scottish representatives to the Royal Commission. These were: that they give security to the English customs and only carry goods that were the produce of England, Scotland or Ireland; and returned directly to an English port to pay duty on any colonial goods imported.

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<sup>69</sup> As quoted by Mowat, *Leith*, pp. 216-8.

<sup>70</sup> *Act of the Privy Council (Colonial)*, I, no. 848, as quoted by P. Gouldesburgh, 'An Attempted Scottish Voyage to New York in 1669', *Scottish Historical Review*, 40, (1961) p. 56.



This new clause justified switching the destination of the *Hope* - from New York to Virginia - in order to attract a few steerage volunteers and to raise the prospect of a more lucrative return cargo of tobacco for the promoters. Even so, finding the requisite numbers of passengers proved laborious for the recruiting agents as John Kennoway wrote to his brother; 'I heir that Sir Wm [William Wallace of Balcaskie, later Kinross] is to send some vessellis to Virginie. It is reported heire that thair is severall unsuffi[cient] persons taken to send thairin'.<sup>71</sup> The prohibitive expense of incarcerating and transporting felons to Edinburgh or Leith seems to have dissuaded outlying magistrates from adding to the numbers on-board the *Hope*.

The *Hope* and her human cargo never cleared Scottish waters as she was wrecked with few survivors on Cairnbulg sands in Fraserburgh Bay, in late December 1669.<sup>72</sup> Despite this initial disaster however an annual autumn sailing from Leith with felons for the plantations continued until 1672. After that date the frequency of passages increased to accommodate a glut of criminal and political prisoners sentenced to transportation. In 1673, one 'Moreis Trent', merchant of Leith, was authorised to transport 'a great multitudes of vagabonds, idle and sturdie beggars and louse and masterles men, and women who have no visible way of liviliehood'.<sup>73</sup> Their departure on the *Hercules* was delayed by a warrant to search the vessel for 'frie' persons illegally carried on-board.<sup>74</sup> The clearing out of undesirables to America continued with the *St Jo[h]n* of Leith transporting a party of 'Egyptians [gypsies]' moved from Dunbar to Edinburgh tollbooth for embarkation.<sup>75</sup>

Around this time the liberal interpretation of the June amendment to the Order in Council was successfully challenged, no doubt due to Scottish abuse of the privilege.

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<sup>71</sup> SRO, Bruce of Kinross MSS GD 29 1962/23. The other owners, at one time or another, were, William Binning, James Currie (both later Provosts of Edinburgh), James Standsfield (later of Newmilns) and Robert Baird of Saughtonhall.

<sup>72</sup> She may have been heading for the Moray Firth or Cromarty to collect new prisoners as one collecting agent was 'a merchant of Tain'; *ibid*, p. 62.

<sup>73</sup> *RPC*, IV, p. 83.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid*, p.103. The *Hercules* departing from Leith to Virginia in September under Captain Edward Say.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 490 and 144.



The curtailment of Scottish sailings to Virginia brought a rapid retort from the colonists who complained, in 1675, that the re-introduction of the ban on Scottish traders threatened to cut their supply of cheap labour as; '[Scots]men will not bring [bonded and unfree] servants when they bring [away] no other commodities'.<sup>76</sup>

This trickle of Scottish vessels and masters crossing the Atlantic provided the kernel of expertise that was needed to launch the Scots' illegal assault on the trade with America in the decades that followed. To the fore in penetrating the closed market in colonial commodities were the Clyde ports with their direct access to Atlantic via the North Channel. The impression given by the evidence available is that the number of masters (some probably English) and vessels involved was very small and the frequency of passage highly erratic during the 1670s and early 1680s. Those that can be identified include the one time letter of marque vessel - the *Rainbow* of Glasgow - which sailed for the plantations (February 1671) before hostilities with the Dutch resumed. In December of the following year, when the North Sea was again a war zone, the *Glasgow Merchant* left the Clyde to re-establish direct trade to Barbados and the West Indies.<sup>77</sup> With the Algerine corsair threat in southern European waters still unresolved, Port Glasgow dispatched the *Benjamin* to the West Indies and back twice in 1681. She was followed by the *Walter* of Glasgow which was diverted from her usual run to Cadiz to the West Indies for the next two successive years (1682-3).<sup>78</sup>

It would be wrong to assume that Port Glasgow was the sole participant. Ayr re-entered the West Indies trade in earnest in 1673 with the dispatch of two small vessels - the *James* and the *Unity* - both of which successfully returned from Monserrat in the Leeward Islands.<sup>79</sup> This destination became a speciality for Ayr masters as the *Swan* returned from there in 1678 while the *James* made three more passages, under different

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<sup>76</sup> *State Papers American and West Indies, 1675-1676*, p. 304 as quoted by Lipson, p. 127.

<sup>77</sup> The voyage of the *Rainbow*; *RPC*, II, p. 299. The *Glasgow Merchant*; *RPC*, III, pp. 259 and 678.

<sup>78</sup> The voyage of the *Benjamin*; SRO Port Book, E. 72/19/1 and 2 - and the *Walter*; E. 72/19/5,6 and 8.

<sup>79</sup> The voyage of the *James*; *ibid*, E. 72/3/7 - and the *Unity*; E. 72/3/3.



masters, in the years 1678, 1681 and 1683.<sup>80</sup> By 1681 the undeveloped 'creeks' on the Ayrshire coast were also risking their best vessel on a West Indies venture, primarily to Nevis, Barbados and Monserrat. Saltcoats sent out the *William & James* whilst the *Jean* of Largs left Port Glasgow in April 1684.<sup>81</sup> The lax enforcement of the Navigation Acts by the local administrators on these islands actively invited Scottish interlopers at this time. Such practices were not however tolerated in the main tobacco growing areas of the American eastern seaboard, principally the Chesapeake region.

### **The rise of the Scottish trade in colonial tobacco - the first systematic breach of the English Navigation Acts**

The Glasgow merchants were quick to realise the opening created by the transportation of felons as 'servants' to the principal growing areas of Virginia and Maryland in their efforts to penetrate the tobacco market.<sup>82</sup> The opportunity presented itself with the lucrative contracts awarded by the Secret Council (1678-9) to convey to the plantations as slaves those remaining covenanters who had refused the 'Bond'. The contract for the first year had gone to English vessels brought up to sail directly from Leith. The second year contract to convey between three and four hundred prisoners from Leith was however won by William Paterson of Glasgow. His chartered vessel - the *Crown* of London - was wrecked on the coast of Orkney and the 258 prisoners crammed under secured hatches left to drown while the captain and his crew saved themselves. News of their inhuman conditions in passage and their pitiless fate raised a general public outcry.<sup>83</sup> It would appear however that it was not until December 1685

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<sup>80</sup> The voyage of the *Swan*; *ibid*, E. 72/3/4 - and the other passages of the *James*; E. 72/ 3/7,11 and 12.

<sup>81</sup> The voyage of the *William and James*; *ibid*, E. 72./96/6 - and the *Jean* E. 72/19/9.

<sup>82</sup> *RPC*, XI, pp. 78 and 257.

<sup>83</sup> J. Grant, *Old and New Edinburgh* (London, undated), III, p. 189.



that the last consignment of prisoners embarked from Leith for the plantations on board the *John & Nicholas* (180 tons/ 12 guns).<sup>84</sup>

The solution to the perils of going north-about *en route* to the Americas was to ship directly out of the Clyde. Walter Gibson's consortium contracted with Robert Malloch, the government agent for transportation, to handle regular consignments of prisoners and undesirable elements 'in shackles' from Greenock and Port Glasgow to Virginia and the Carolinas.<sup>85</sup> His premier vessel was the *Pelican* of Glasgow, commanded by James Gibson (late of the *Phoenix* of Leith) aided by two other vessels - the *John* and *Friendship* of Port Glasgow.<sup>86</sup> Consignments of prisoners were subsequently shipped from the Clyde until the mid 1690's after which the increasing availability of negro slave labour in the eastern seaboard plantations undermined the commercial viability of transportation.

During the 1680s the focus of the Clyde's transatlantic activities switched from the West Indies to New England, specifically Virginia and the Carolinas. In 1680 Edward Randolph, the Surveyor General of Customs for the American Plantations, reported that 'many ships full laden with tobacco' gave bond to the Naval Officers' Office at Boston that they were bound for unpatrolled Newfoundland when, in fact, they intended to sail straight for 'Scotland, Canada and other foreign places'.<sup>87</sup> It is interesting to note that even the normally dedicated *James* of Ayr forsook her regular destination in the West Indies for a solitary passage to Virginia in July 1681. There are indications however that she still took the precaution of carrying a few bonded servants to legitimise her entry into an English colony.<sup>88</sup> The illegal trade in plantation

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<sup>84</sup> As quoted by Mowat, *Leith*, p. 218.

<sup>85</sup> *RPC*, VII, p. 653. A resume of Walter Gibson's trading exploits is available in W.F. MacArthur, *History of Port Glasgow* (Glasgow, 1932), pp. 32-3.

<sup>86</sup> SRO, Port Book E. 72/19/1/2. The *Pelican's* first consignment of twenty-two prisoners departed from Greenock in July 1684; D. Weir, *History of the Town of Greenock* (Glasgow, 1829) p. 67.

<sup>87</sup> R.G. Lounsury, *The British Fishery at Newfoundland, 1634-1763*, (Newhaven, 1734, reprint London, 1969), p. 44.

<sup>88</sup> The *James* of Ayr was declared free to leave by the Lords of the Committee of Council having been searched by soldiers of the Major General for stolen goods in 1678. Such official permission to sail directly for America would imply that she was carrying servants; *RPC*, V. p. 528. Ayr Burgh records of this period make



commodities was not exclusive to the Clyde ports as the *Hope* 'of Edinburgh' cleared out of Leith for New England in the same month as the *James*, keeping alive the Forth's interest in the Americas for that year.<sup>89</sup>

By the end of that decade the turmoil of the Glorious Revolution provided the ideal cover for Walter Gibson (Provost of Glasgow by 1687) and his circle of merchants and masters. They dropped all but token pretences of carrying bonded servants when running commodity cargo directly from the Clyde to America and tobacco back. In the few years it took William and Mary to secure the British throne from the immediate threat of a Jacobite invasion, the damaging effect of Scottish incursion on legal trading had become all too blatant. In 1692 Randolph, in his frustration at the impotence of the English navy to deter their activities, wrote to William Blathwayt, the Secretary-at-war:

I find yet in these 3 years last there has been above 5ships trading legally in all those rivers and nigh 30 sayle of Scotch, Irish and New England men. I humbly inclose to your honours A forg'd certificate (No. 4) produced to Major King by William Hall of Boston allowed of by Mr Layfield he clear'd his ship having 110 hds [hogsheads] aboard ye 7th April 1689 and went to Scotland since which time to ye 25th May 1692 above 1644 hds has been shipt off by interlopers... above 20 Scotch, Irish and New England vessels within these [last] 8 months have sayld out of ye Cape with their loading of tobacco for Scotland and Holland and ye man of warr had not discover'd one of them.<sup>90</sup>

Their avoidance of Customs officers in America was by then, a relatively simple matter. The Scottish, and occasionally hired English masters, covered their illegal outward passage from a Scottish port by registering and clearing from an English port *en route* - usually Whitehaven. This device is evident in the instruction from the owner of the *Antilop* to her captain, Cabel Chapin; 'y[e]t caire may be taken about cleiring in

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occasional reference to banishment to the Americas and authorised the 'Master Mariner' of the port to contract their shipment out of the port; J. Crighton, *Contributions to Scottish Maritime History* (Ayr, undated), p. 16.

<sup>89</sup> SRO, Port Book, E. 72/3/4.

<sup>90</sup> As quoted by C.M. MacInnes, *The Early English Tobacco Trade*, (London, 1926), p. 179.



England' on his voyage from the Clyde to the Chesapeake in 1693.<sup>91</sup> The return passage was not a matter of concern as they sailed directly back to the Clyde avoiding English Customs altogether. The only real danger was interception by English warships and privateers in Scottish waters. Despite these hazards and the upheavals that followed the Protestant Succession, the trade to the Americas was firmly established by the mid-decade. In 1695, the year before the introduction of the stringent Plantation Register system, the Crown Agent for Customs in Scotland reported that twenty-four vessels were trading to the American colonies in defiance of the Navigation Acts.<sup>92</sup> This figure is not far off that of the number of vessels directly trading to the Chesapeake during the quieter years of the main decade of the 'tobacco era' (1760s) in Scottish history.

After the new English Navigation Act was implemented (1696), other routes were found to evade the colonial customs service in the Chesapeake and so maintain the illegal trade. One involved carting hogsheads of tobacco overland to ports in Pennsylvania and Massachusetts for shipment to the Clyde via Newfoundland. The unresolved status of Newfoundland, as an extension of His Majesty's realm of England but 'not a true plantation', gave the Clyde shippers and their Whitehaven allies in the tobacco trade an exit point from the Americas away from direct customs surveillance of the Navigations Acts.<sup>93</sup>

### **The Scottish Council of Trade's deliberations on Scotland's 'ballance of trade'**

The Duke of York, despite his reputation for oppressive handling of Scotland's internal affairs, can be accredited with displaying commendable knowledge and vigour

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<sup>91</sup> GCA, Shawfield MSS 1/42-43, letter 21 October 1693. Those that did not take this precaution did so at their cost; as with the detention of John Watson's unregistered ship in the West Indies was found with Maryland tobacco onboard after conveying her cargo of bonded servants to Pennsylvania; SRO, Court of Session Processes 29/1752.

<sup>92</sup> As quoted by MacArthur, *Port Glasgow*, p. 34.

<sup>93</sup> D. S. Macmillan, 'The "New Men" in Action: Scottish Mercantile and Shipping Operations in the North American Colonies, 1760-1825', *Canadian Business History*, (Toronto, 1972), pp. 50-51. He holds the opinion that Scottish supposed involvement in the Newfoundland fisheries was a cover for illegal trading.



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manufactures, fish and grain (except in famine years) on top of discriminatory tariffs on coal and salt. The Provost went on to predict that any further tightening of the English Navigation Acts and duties would ruin both the English market for Scottish linen and the overland trade in cattle. He concluded that, as England had displaced Holland as the principal market for Scottish trade, the only logical course of action was to seek; '...ane union of traid...seing ane union betwixt the kingdoms cannot be hoped for'.<sup>96</sup> Such a customs union, he conceded, would not gain free access for Scottish shippers to the colonial trades.

His recommendations for redressing the balance of trade with Scotland's European trading partners was relatively simple in comparison. The Dutch trade (mostly in household goods and utensils) was not, he considered, a cause for concern as it 'was great now in decay' and the [bi-lateral] balance of trade was currently in Scotland's favour. The drain of bullion to France, Scotland's oldest commercial ally, was a serious concern and primarily due to the salt trade in which the French had an absolute advantage in both price and quality. The solution proposed by the Provost was to place an outright ban on its import so that all domestic consumption would henceforth be of locally produced salt. Furthermore, he believed that the export trade to France could be readily boosted by offering £2,000 sterling to the French customs farmers in exchange for a waiver on the import levy of fifty sous per ton of Scottish manufacture.

He also looked forward to an increase in the neglected trade with Spain which he believed was due to 'our own fault [as] we have no more advantage [in trade]'. As with all efforts in assaulting the 'South' trade, he blamed the debased home coinage as a major obstacle to commerce. The solution he proposed was that the internationally respected Spanish gold pieces of eight and silver ducatoons should be actively acquired to substitute for the unwelcome Scottish coinage when trading abroad.

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid, p. 653.



He also identified the purchase and hire of foreign hulls as worthy of special consideration by the Council. Up until then the acquisition of Norwegian and Dutch built hulls had been deemed unavoidable if Scotland's shipping stock was to be maintained. The elimination of this drain on the nation's coinage was therefore a prime target for direct intervention. A ban on the purchase of foreign vessels would also have the highly desirable effect of nurturing the virtually non-existent home shipbuilding industry. The growth of which was the key to fulfilling the 'British-built' condition of entry under the terms of the existing English Navigation Acts.

Such deliberations were influenced by a perceived current surplus of tonnage 'latly built and bought' by Scottish owners. The Provost believed that since the last review of the Scottish marine at end of the Second Dutch War (estimated at 215 vessels) the number of Scottish wholly or partly owned 'ships, busses, barks and great boats' had doubled. As a consequence the Council issued a decree in February 1681 which placed an outright ban on the purchase or co-ownership of foreign hulls under pain of confiscation.<sup>97</sup> This decree was not however put into effect until 1 May 1682. This was to allow vessels already ordered to be delivered and for existing 'co-ownerships' with Dutch or other foreign partners to be liquidated. At the same time all import duties on ship-building materials were removed to encourage the home industry.

There was however an inherent problem to this simplistic solution. The previous influx of Dutch hulls and technology into the Scottish marine had proved to be a mixed blessing. As the Council noted, some of the prizes were 'so great in bulk as not proper for our trade' which was, indirectly, an indictment of the retarded state of development of the Scottish east coast ports.<sup>98</sup> On the other hand those prizes under 200 tons, the majority, were easily absorbed into the expanding Scottish marine. They were however largely responsible for stifling the indigenous ship-building industry.

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid, p. 671. The rigour of its enforcement is evident in the number of petitions received by the Privy Council for permission to purchase foreign hulls during the years of the embargo. An example is that of the shippers of Montrose who had lost six or seven vessels in the space of twelve months. Their plea was granted in 1685 on condition it was not taken as a precedent by others; *ibid*, XII, p. 140.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid*, XVIII, p. 679.



The English shipbuilding industry, by way of contrast, does not appear to have been adversely effected by the vast influx of prizes taken by her privateers. Professor Davis has demonstrated that the English marine, with its deep-water ports, deployed the captured Dutch bulk carriers to service the rapid post-war expansion in trade without significant drawbacks to her shipbuilding industry. This, he concluded, was due to the fact that the English ship-building industry had largely specialised in the building of armed traders and so served a substantially different market to that of the Dutch shipbuilding industry.<sup>99</sup>

The question posed by the Provost of Linlithgow was which of these two diverging design concepts in hulls and rig should be actively promoted by the Council?<sup>100</sup> The 'Dutch' formula hulls maximised carrying capacity for specific trades while minimising operating costs as best typified by the ubiquitous *fluyt* boat. This design formula - narrow decked and full tumble-home hull hoisting easily managed sail plans - produced a very high tonnage-to-crew ratio. This gave the economies of scale which allowed the Dutch to dominate the peacetime north-south carrying trade of Europe.<sup>101</sup> The alternative concept, which the Provost of Linlithgow referred to as the 'Swedes' formula, was the *frigatto* [frigate] design of hull. This design was based on a wide flushed-deck hull that served as a stable gun platform 'so as to provide in war and trade'.<sup>102</sup> The Swedes had promoted the 'frigot way' for some time by offering remission of half the duties payable on the launching of such hulls.<sup>103</sup> This design had also been taken up by the English shipbuilders as their buyers expected armed trading in peacetime and valued the option of up-gunning the vessel as a 'running ship' or privateer in wartime. That these vessels required a larger crew than their Dutch counterparts was rapidly becoming a secondary issue. As the few Scottish *frigatto* privateers had

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<sup>99</sup> English traders to the Americas, Africa, the Mediterranean and the East were invariably armed due to the risk of piracy, privateers or the prospect of returning to a war in European waters.

<sup>100</sup> *RPC*, VI, pp. 657-8.

<sup>101</sup> R. Davis, *The Rise of the Atlantic Economy* (London, 1973), p. 181.

<sup>102</sup> *RPC*, VII, p. 654.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid*, p. 652-3.



demonstrated, survivability was rapidly taking precedence over profitability in the new order.<sup>104</sup>

It was clear that Scotland's dual aspirations of owning a marine that could win a share in the highly competitive European peacetime carrying trades whilst securing a foothold in the hostile trading environment of the Atlantic, could not be fully met by one design. In the certain knowledge that any future Scottish assault on the trade of others would be opposed, the Council of Trade elected to recommend the *frigatto* design. In practical terms however this decision had little direct impact as the Council had already decided to remove import duties on all shipbuilding materials, leaving the matter of the hull design in the hands of the purchasing ship-owners.

### **The Scottish Royal Burghs' defence of their monopoly of foreign trade**

Running parallel to the lengthy deliberations on a national trading policy, and equally important to the unleashing of Scotland's overseas trading potential, was the breaking of the Scottish Royal Burghs' monopoly to 'communicate in foreign trade'. This legal anachronism, a legacy from the medieval period, had been confirmed as late as 1633 by an Act of the Scottish Parliament. This privilege was conceded in recognition of the Royal Burghs' assumption of the burden of collecting the cess tax on behalf of the Scottish Exchequer. Since then their hold on trade had become increasingly challenged with the rise of the 'new' ports. The outcome of which was a series legal disputes between the 'free' and 'unfree' Scottish burghs over the 'right to communicate' in overseas trade during the period 1669-1710.

The first such challenge arose in 1669 when the Duke of Hamilton declared his intention to raise the status of his town of Bo'ness to that of a free port by its elevation

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<sup>104</sup> Dutch losses are discussed in; Bruijn, *Course et Piraterie*, p. 415.



to a Burgh of Regality.<sup>105</sup> While the implications of this precedent was being considered, the Royal Burghs went on the offensive. A test case was instigated against the 'unfree' Burgh of Falkirk by the Royal Burgh of Linlithgow supported by Stirling. The eventual outcome of which was a compromise embodied in a new Act of the Scottish Parliament (1672). By this Act the right to 'communicate' in trade was conceded to the new unfree Burghs of Regality or Barony in return for their solemn undertaking to relieve the members of the Convention of Royal Burghs of an agreed proportion of the cess tax.<sup>106</sup>

The collective response of the unfree burghs was, with the notable exceptions of Glasgow and Arbroath, to ignore this offer to legitimise their trading activities. The principal reason was that they stood to lose the cost advantage they presently offered as a haven from the cess tax for their resident merchants and shipmasters. Furthermore, since the customs house was invariably located at the head port (the neighbouring Royal Burgh) trading through the unfree port usually gave the shipper ample opportunity to evade duties. Indeed, the loss of trade experienced by the free port to their unfree neighbours led several of them to petition to have their Royal Burgh status nullified.<sup>107</sup>

The Convention of Royal Burghs sought to retrieve the situation by securing the 'total rescission' of the 1672 Act thereby re-establishing its members' monopoly on overseas trade.<sup>108</sup> At their annual meeting in 1681 the Convention resolved to exploit their tax leverage to expedite matters. It was not however until June 1690 and a change of monarch, that their former privileges were reinstated by an Act of the Scottish Parliament.<sup>109</sup> This act went beyond the previous status quo as it not only confirmed

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<sup>105</sup> Records of the Convention of the Royal Burghs of Scotland as quoted by T. Pagan, *The Convention of the Royal Burghs* (1920), pp. 133-4.

<sup>106</sup> Between the Restoration and the Union, fifty one Burghs of Barony and Regality were to be created.

<sup>107</sup> A more detailed report on this clash of interest is available in J. Marwick, *The River Clyde and the Clyde Burghs* (Glasgow, 1909), pp. 121-156.

<sup>108</sup> The fine of £200 Scots imposed by the Lords of the Treasury on Sir John Shaw of Greenock and associates for importing leather (1681) was ordered to be given to the relief of a prisoner held captive by the turks; *ibid*, p. 121.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid*, p. 127.



their monopoly, but also prohibited burgesses from holding partnerships with 'unfreemen'; loading or unloading at unfree ports or hiring vessels or crews from unfree ports.<sup>110</sup>

This draconian legal move brought a somewhat belated response from Greenock, the main offender. Sir John Shaw the Younger represented his burgh at the July Convention of 1691 and conceded the principle of relieving the cess tax. He refused however to be drawn by how much his burgh would agree to contribute, which was perceived as a stalling manoeuvre 'mor ingenuous and poynted than the rest, yet in regaird he wold not liquidar his offer'.<sup>111</sup>

### **The state and condition of the Scottish fleets as reported to the Register of 1692**

The next move in the Convention's offensive was already in hand. Their prime objective was to demonstrate to Parliament the degree to which fraudulent trading via the unfree burghs had contributed to their decline. This was to be achieved by a national survey of the Royal Burghs commissioned in 1690, the results of which were eventually presented to the Conventions meeting at Dundee, 14 July 1692, as a *Register containeing of the State and Condition of every [Royal] Burghs within the Kingdome of Scotland*.<sup>112</sup>

During its compilation fifteen instructions were issued to those entrusted with completing the local report to ensure a standardised and comprehensive survey. The seventh instruction is of particular relevance to an appraisal of shipping of the period as it required them to 'take exact accompt of what ships, barks, boats and ferry boats they

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid p. 129-30. In the lower Firth of Clyde action was taken against vessels belonging to Saltcoats and Newton-on Ayr.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid, p. 130.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid, pp. 53-157.



have belonging to them, the names of the saides ships, ther burden, and value of each of them, and how imployed and by whom.<sup>113</sup>

The validity of the *Register of 1692* as a reliable source of shipping data has however been questioned; principally on the grounds that it was conceived as part of a political agenda and compiled from reports undertaken by local notaries who had a vested interest in portraying a morbid scene of decay in the trade and shipping of the Royal Burgh ports. In defence of the integrity of the survey and its findings it can be argued that the checks and balances that the architects of the *Register* included from the outset are as even-handed and objective as can be reasonably expected from this era.

Indeed, the *Register's* compilers were fully aware of the need to pre-empt the inevitable allegations of bias and collusion that would be levelled at them by the powerful patrons of the unfree ports. To this end two groups of 'visitors', raised from the membership of the Convention, were commissioned to tour the Royal Burghs ascertaining for themselves the correctness of the local report. To avoid charges of partisan reporting or collusion, the visitors were chosen from the opposing coast to the one they were inspecting. It followed that the Royal Burghs on the Clyde and south-west coast were visited by James Fletcher, Provost of Dundee, in company with Alexander Walker, Baillie of Aberdeen; while those on the Forth and east coast were visited by John Muir and James Smalet, the Provosts of Ayr and Dumbarton respectively.<sup>114</sup> Furthermore, those responsible for the primary compilation of the shipping stock at the major ports usually had a high degree of competence in maritime matters as they were either master mariners or merchants. In the case of Leith, the largest Scottish port, the shipping list was compiled by Walter Learmouth 'shor master'.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid, p. 53.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid, p. 38.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid, p. 56.



From a modern viewpoint the fact that a few of the maritime Royal Burghs were not visited and hence omitted (Wick, Dornoch, Kirkwall, Brevie and Galloway) requires consideration. Their absence however is a minor concern as it is fairly certain they owned no vessels of consequence, other than a few open boats, during this period and so do little to invalidate the overall findings of the shipping aspects of the survey. Much more to the point is the grave reservation raised by Professor Smout that, as with Tucker's report (1656), the *Register of 1692* was taken in the depth of a trade cycle aggravated by war and hence gives an unrepresentative view of the Scottish ports and their shipping stock for the era.<sup>116</sup> While this was undoubtedly the case, it can be readily argued that as warfare at sea was virtually endemic to the period. War-affected trade cycles and adverse sailing conditions were, to all intents and purposes, common and hence representative of the early mercantilist period.

The inescapable fact remains that, given the dearth of statistical information on Scottish shipping since Tucker's report, the vessels listed at each port in the *Register of 1692* offers the only credible database of Scottish vessels for the pre-Union period and the second benchmark in the progress of the Scottish marine.

Transforming the shipping data in the *Register of 1692* into a national survey of all Scottish ports of consequence requires however allowance for the unreported shipping of the unfree ports. At the time of its compilation (1690) the majority of these unfree ports - Campbeltown, Saltcoats, Alloa, Prestonpans, Port Seton and Peterhead - were still wholly undeveloped anchorages and as yet to be raised to the status of Burgh of Barony and so can be largely discounted. This leaves the fleets of Greenock and Bo'ness to be deduced for inclusion with those of the Royal Burghs.

The Greenock vessels engaged in overseas ventures were, fortunately, well documented in the complaints made to the Convention by the neighbouring Royal Burghs of Dumbarton and Glasgow. These accusations referred to four vessels - the

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<sup>116</sup> T.C. Smout, 'The Overseas Trade of Ayrshire', *Ayrshire Archaeological and Natural History Society*, 6, pp. 56-7.



*John*, the *Neptune*, the *George* and the *Hendrie*.<sup>117</sup> Further details of these vessels are available from the Glasgow reporter's admission that his merchants were still heavily involved as part-owners, in violation of the Convention's previous ban on partnerships outside the Royal Burgh. Such 'co-partneries' would appear to have been widespread prior to this date as evident in the case of the *John*:

the half whereof was laitle bought by two merchants in Glasgow at ane roup, but they hearing of the lait act of the royall burrows dischairgeing ther haveing any partnership with unfreemen in shipping they stopt to be any farder concerned therein.<sup>118</sup>

This ship, at 130 tons, was almost certainly Greenock's largest vessel at this time. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that the total tonnage of the four reported monopoly-breaking vessels of Greenock could not exceed 520 tons. By way of comparison the *Register of 1692* listed the newly developed deep water harbour of 'Newport' Glasgow, 'the second trading royall burgh of the kingdome' to Leith, as supporting four vessels of one hundred tons and over and a further five hulls over fifty tons. It is therefore highly unlikely that Greenock's foreign-going fleet matched or exceeded that of its neighbour.

There still remains the unspecified number of partially decked and open boats based at Greenock. Tucker's earlier report mentioned that these smaller craft served as coastal carriers trading mainly to Ireland or the isles 'with small smiddy coals' or engaged in herring fishing within the Firth of Clyde. The solution would seem to lie in a comparison with the report from the haven of Renfrew, a few miles up-river, which had the largest fleet of fishing boats mentioned in the *Register of 1692*. They numbered twenty four open boats of three or five tons, served by two larger salt boats of twelve and fifteen tons respectively; all of which do not amount to an accumulative total of 150 tons.<sup>119</sup> It would seem reasonable to assume that Greenock's flotilla of small boats

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<sup>117</sup> J.L. Dow, *Greenock* (Greenock, 1975), p. 62.

<sup>118</sup> Marwick, *Miscellany*, p. 75.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid*, p. 119.



did not greatly exceed that of Renfrew at this time. If this 'inshore' element is added to Greenock's foreign-going fleet the composite estimate is around 670 tons, roughly half the total declared for Port Glasgow.

The estimate for the omission of the Bo'ness fleet is somewhat more tenuous. Tucker remarked that the Bo'ness anchorage once rivalled Leith for the title of premier port of Scotland but he failed to report any indigenous vessels there or along the immediate coast.<sup>120</sup> It may well be that only Dutch and Leith shippers visited the undeveloped anchorages at Bo'ness and Grangepans at that time to land goods for the west coast markets, without paying duty duties. Circumstantial evidence lends support as only three out of the forty-odd Forth privateers commissioned during the Second Dutch War (1664-7) declared Bo'ness as their home port .

By 1690 however it is fairly evident from the number of complaints being raised by her neighbouring Royal Burgh of Linlithgow, that a shipping fraternity had established itself at the new Burgh of Regality of Bo'ness. The Linlithgow reporter to the *Register* referred to the rising prosperity of the unfree burgh and the 'great prejudice' it had on the surrounding towns and villages 'who wrong ther trade by venting abundance of staple comodities to the countrey'. As with Greenock, the promoters behind the rising numbers of foreign-going vessels at Bo'ness can traced back to those very same Royal Burghs making the complaints to the Convention. This is evident in the evasive response made by the freeman merchants of Linlithgow to the enquiring magistrates; 'that they being surprized could not satisfie them therin at the tyme, but desired that they have four moneths tyme to consider on it, that if there were any unfreemen concerned with them'.<sup>121</sup> In contrast, the Glasgow reporter openly acknowledged his merchants involvement in illegal partnerships in three vessels on the upper Forth - one of 200 tons (the biggest in the *Register of 1692*) and two of 150 tons

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid. p. 19.

<sup>121</sup> Marwick, *Miscellany*, p. 19.



each.<sup>122</sup> These hulls were of a size that could only work regularly out Bo'ness on that particular stretch of the Forth. As external co-partnery was usually the hallmark of a major venture, it is likely that these vessels were the largest of the Bo'ness fleet at this time.

As to smaller coastal and fishing craft the later eighteenth century Customs annual shipping returns for Bo'ness record only a few small craft belong to the port of Bo'ness (separate from its creeks) as the southern shore of the precinct had little direct involvement in the inshore fisheries or the coal trade of the Forth. The impression given by this profile is that of a home fleet composed of a few large sea-going vessels and small craft, not too dissimilar to that of the port of Kirkcaldy, her nearest rival in the Forth at this time.

Without any compensatory element for the omitted fleets of Greenock and Bo'ness, the data available from the *Register of 1692* (when adjusted for the few inconsistencies in reporting) listed *c.*232 vessels (totalling *c.*8,400 tons).<sup>123</sup> With the removal of all fishing boats (three to five tons), this figure drops to *c.*127 vessels (*c.*7,160 tons) described as 'ships' or 'boats' capable of an off-shore passage.<sup>124</sup> When the ports of Greenock and Bo'ness are included (by generously accrediting each with fleets the size of their comparable rivals Port Glasgow and Kirkcaldy respectively) the final tally for Scotland rises to just over 10,000 tons, half the modern estimate for the era in peacetime.<sup>125</sup> Within this estimated stock, the number of Scottish vessels capable of foreign-going voyage at this time was around 150, of which at least a third were open or partially-decked boats.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid, p. 75.

<sup>123</sup> The total was achieved by: a. by taking the higher number where vessel numbers or tonnage quoted are between two figures (e.g. 7 or 8 barks); b. by awarding five tons to every fishing boat mentioned (based on Rothesay report); c. by awarding forty tons (the average) for every trading 'bark' or 'boat' listed without a specified tonnage (e.g. the Irvine report).

<sup>124</sup> The general usage of the terms 'ship' and 'boat' is to distinguish those hulls with a deck. Tucker did not report 'boats' under five tons.

<sup>125</sup> Professor Smout holds the opinion that between 1660 and 1707 the Scottish fleet, excluding boats engaged solely in fishing or coastal trade, was *c.*20,000 tons in normal peacetime trading conditions; Smout, *Scottish Trade*, p. 54. This would imply that the disasters of the late 1680's had halved the fleet.

<sup>126</sup> Hulls below forty tons were often open or partially decked at this time.



The requirement to assess the condition of their vessels was generally ignored by the reporters to the *Register* and is a great loss to the overall assessment of the Scottish fleets as they enter a prolonged period of warfare.<sup>127</sup> Only the Kirkcaldy return specifically mentioned the age of its individual vessels. This port supported fourteen trading vessels (1,215 tons) and came a close third behind 'New Port' Glasgow in Scotland's league of ship-owning ports by tonnage.<sup>128</sup> Of her fleet, eight of her vessels (nearly half the tonnage of the port) date from the Dutch Wars and were a motley collection of 'fluyt boats', 'pinks' and 'doggars'. The oldest was a thirty years 'doggar' (45 tons) and along with most of the sea-going fleet pre-dated the embargo on acquiring foreign-built vessels imposed by the Council of Trade.<sup>129</sup> If the state of the Kirkcaldy fleet was typical for the east coast stock of vessels, then hull and rigging fatigue must have been a contributory factor to the high numbers reported lost at sea in the years immediately prior to 1692.<sup>130</sup>

The other reason for high losses, consistently mentioned in the returns to the *Register*, was the scourge of enemy privateers, particularly on the traditional northern European routes. On the east coast, the premier port of Leith lost three vessels carrying wine from France in the twelve months prior to the report.<sup>131</sup> The loss of which left Leith with only twenty nine vessels to report.<sup>132</sup> On the west coast the return from Ayr catalogued a series of misfortunes at sea that virtually annihilated the fleet of this once prosperous port; 'within these twenty or thertie years, fourty sail of ships wherin the toun were concerned lost'.<sup>133</sup> The closure of the French markets and the general slump

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<sup>127</sup> It must be borne in mind that at this time it was common, especially with the smaller communities of the east coast to refer to a vessel by the owner/master (e.g., 'George Tod's ship') rather than by the vessel's name and port. On the west coast this form of identity was rare.

<sup>128</sup> Marwick, *Miscellany*, pp. 83-4.

<sup>129</sup> The youngest vessel was declared as ten years old, which makes it possible that she was bought as a new hull before the embargo was implemented on 1 May 1682. See glossary for description of types of vessel.

<sup>130</sup> An example is the report from Dundee which lists a loss of ten vessels and cargoes valued at c.70,000 merks; Marwick, *Miscellany*, p. 63.

<sup>131</sup> One of which was the *Charles* of Leith, Edward Burd master, which was carried into Dunkirk; Wood, *Extracts of the Burgh of Edinburgh*, 6 November 1689.

<sup>132</sup> Marwick, *Miscellany*, pp. 56-7.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid*, p. 78.



in trade caused by the war led to the lay up and dereliction of many of the surviving hulls. Dumfries bemoaned the fate of her small fleet 'lyen up these three or four years for want of trade and soe are ruinous'.<sup>134</sup> Following on the heels of their general exclusion by English Navigation Acts, the Council of Trade's embargo on the purchase of new foreign built hulls had only succeeded in creating an ageing fleet that was ill-prepared to meet the combined attrition of war and natural disasters at sea.

The general impression created by the *Register of 1692*, intentional or otherwise, was that there had been a dramatic deterioration in the fortunes of the Scottish marine since the short-lived revival of the previous decade. The Scottish marine now barely matched one ton for every hundred of English shipping.<sup>135</sup> It must have seemed to the reporters to the *Register of 1692* that the situation could not get any worse as they looked towards the new century.

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid, p. 92.

<sup>135</sup> English statistics are taken from Davis, *English Shipping*, p. 25.



## CHAPTER II: THE DEFENCE OF THE SCOTTISH MARITIME INTEREST 1688-1707

The two critical decades between the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and the Act of Union in Scottish history have received extensive and detailed attention from a broad spectrum of historians. The main thrust of their deliberations has been the economic considerations that propelled Scotland into accepting the Act of Union of 1707. Dividing learned opinion are the basic questions: as to whether the prime economic motive for the Scots was the promise of post-union free trade opportunities within the British Empire or immediate and dire economic necessity; and, more recently, was the decision to embrace the full 'incorporating union' inevitable - given the alternative options of a customs or revamped regal union?<sup>1</sup> In this debate the series of clashes at sea over maritime sovereignty during reigns of William and Mary and later that of Queen Anne, is usually perceived as a background to, rather than a decisive factor in, the acceptance of the full political union solution.

This chapter seeks to redress this imbalance by assessing the part played by maritime affairs in the deterioration of Anglo-Scottish relations to a point where key elements within the Scottish establishment realised that only a full incorporating union could avert the impending schism. Such a union was, in their view, a wholly necessary sacrifice if the future prosperity of the nation was to be secured in a rapidly polarising Europe. Furthermore, this appraisal highlights one of the prime motives behind the English drive to secure a full political union (as opposed to a customs union) with her economically greatly inferior and politically volatile northern neighbour - the need to

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<sup>1</sup> A comprehensive review of publications on the Act of Union is available in C.A. Whatley, 'Economic causes and consequences of the Union of 1707: a survey', *Scottish Historical Review* (1989), LXVIII, pp. 150-181. More recently the same author has reviewed learned opinion in 'Bought and sold for English Gold? Explaining the Union of 1707', *Studies in Scottish Economic and Social History* (Glasgow, 1994), No.4, in which he offers 'a new synthesis' that concludes that there was nothing inevitable about the 1707 Act of Union.



control Scottish maritime affairs. This latter point has tended to received little attention from Scottish historians.<sup>2</sup>

### **The end of royal intercession in Anglo-Scottish maritime affairs**

During the 1688-1707 period the combination of outrages perpetrated by English captains in Scottish waters, wartime stresses and failed colonial schemes, fuelled a chain reaction of national grievances that fully exposed the fallacy of a 'united kingdom'. The removal of James II from the British throne, whilst largely resolving the outstanding religious grievances in the North, wrecked the fine balance of Anglo-Scottish trade rivalries that had been held in check by their common allegiance to the Stuart monarchy. During the reign of Charles II, the offices of High Lord Admiral of England and Scotland had been made subordinate to the central policies of the monarch by James, then the Duke of York. In matters concerning the security of the state, the Stuart navy and its commanders were expected to defend the United Kingdom without undue concern for the separate maritime jurisdictions of the two nations.

The accession of the House of Orange to the British throne however abruptly ended this understanding and flung open the question of Scottish maritime sovereignty in all its manifestations. The Scottish establishment's reaction to the end of absolute rule under the Stuarts was to re-assert the independence of the Scottish nation's institutions from that of England, whilst the matter of the succession of William of Orange to the Scottish crown was negotiated. South of the border, the alliance of manufacturing and mercantile interests were quick to exploit William's dependency on the English Parliament, to greatly accelerate the move towards protectionism in both domestic and overseas trading on strictly national lines. The outcome was that, during the following decade, an elaborate fiscal regime based on high import duties was created

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<sup>2</sup> One of the few authors who has examined the English strategic interest behind a full political union with Scotland is G.S. Pryde, *The Treaty of the Union of Scotland and England 1707* (London, 1950), pp. 14-5.



and enforced by a new rigour to the existing *modus operandi* of the English mercantilist system. In this climate of rising national consciousness and general assertiveness, the distinction between Scottish Jacobite and Williamite and the enforcement of national trading preserves and security became blurred for many English naval and privateering commanders under the strain of war. All of which rode rough-shod over Scottish sensitivity to intrusions in its maritime sovereignty that led to open confrontation and highly partisan behaviour between the marines in home waters, feeding the growing schism between the two nations.

### **The Scottish response to the security crisis in the 'western seas' 1688-90**

The incoming English establishment view of Scotland was, in 1688, first and foremost that of a security problem. The Protestant Succession had created a Jacobite threat on the northern flank of Britain which elevated Scotland to the position of a strategic front-line state and dragged her into a much wider conflict that was destined to involve most of Europe.

The geography of the principal Jacobite areas, essentially those inhabited by the Catholic Gaels in Ireland and Scotland, was highly favourable to naval incursions into north-western waters by their French allies. A successful link up of the Irish and Scottish Jacobites to secure Scotland for the deposed James II would require military landings and supply from the sea. For this to happen, the French navy (or her privateer squadrons) would have to gain control of the 'western seas' for a limited period. The spring of 1689 seemed destined to witness this development.

By March the deposed James II was holding court in Dublin, courtesy of Tyrconnel's army and Louis' navy. With the exception of a few stubborn Protestant strongholds in Ulster, Ireland was secure for James and a union with his supporters on the west coast of Scotland seemed within his grasp. During the summer months of May,



June and July this invasion scare was extended to most of the coastal communities of Britain. The southern coast of England braced itself for a grand naval battle for control of the Channel which would be the prelude to a French invasion. As it transpired, the French navy was content to continue to play the 'Irish card' and did not seriously consider the grander scheme of a direct invasion across the English channel until 1692.<sup>3</sup>

By asserting their independence, the Scottish Parliament summoned by William III to legitimise his claim to the Scottish Crown, was left to provide a defence force to meet the expected Jacobite seaborne invasion in the north-west. In the absence of a 'Scots Navy', authority was immediately given (March 1689) to three commissioners - Sir James Montgomery of Skelmorlie, John Anderson of Dowhill and James Boswell of Kirkcaldy - to oversee the fitting-out of two armed cruisers to meet the threat in the west. These were the *Pelican* of Glasgow (18 guns/120 men) and the *Jannet* of Glasgow (12 guns/ 80 men), both ex-merchantmen of the 'frigate' design and commanded by William Hamilton and Alex Browne (then at Irvine) respectively. Their ambitious quasi-naval commissions were to 'sink all ships belonging to the late King James... from the point of Cornwall to the Isle of Skye'.<sup>4</sup> These two guard vessels represented the extent of naval power that an independent Scotland could muster at the commencement of a century of endemic maritime warfare.

Their fitting-out attests to both the sense of urgency and the absence of an indigenous armaments industry. Commissioner Boswell and the two commanders (all masters of Forth privateers during the Dutch wars) were empowered to appropriate whatever cannon they could find from the laid-up Clyde fleet. In addition four hundredweight of gunpowder was acquired from the stock impounded from a Londonderry master who put in to Greenock having failed to run the blockade. A

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<sup>3</sup> J.R.R. Ehrman, *The Navy in the War of William III*, (Cambridge, 1953), p. 382. A general review is available in; D. Aldridge, 'Jacobites and the Scottish Seas, 1689-1719', *Scotland and the Sea* (Edinburgh, 1992), pp. 76-94.

<sup>4</sup> *Acts of the Scottish Parliament*, IX, p.17 and *RPC*, XIII, p. 412. These vessels were owned by Provost Walter Gibson and Robert Campbell, late Dean of the Guild of Glasgow, respectively who later petitioned for compensation; SRO, Leven and Melville MSS, GD 26 9/260.



company of soldiers, equipped with small arms and shot from Dumbarton Castle, were also ordered onboard to act as marines.<sup>5</sup>

Events, however, overtook the preparation of the two armed cruisers. An indecisive naval action in Bantry Bay (1 May), during which Admiral Herbert's fleet narrowly escaped defeat, left the French naval presence in Irish waters largely unscathed. The fall of the besieged Protestant strongholds in Ulster (Enniskillen and Londonderry) appeared imminent as their seaborne supplies were cut off. To meet this immediate crisis a further three privateers were hastily commissioned by Lord Hamilton, as President of the Scottish Parliament. Two were Ulster blockade-runners, based in the Clyde, who were supplying their besieged kinsmen whilst evacuating women and children. It is symptomatic of the general confusion of the time that these captains were elevated to quasi-naval officers by rather odd commissions that can only be properly described as 'letters of reprisal'.<sup>6</sup> Their writ was to search all 'highland birlins' for arms to deny the Scottish Jacobites additional weaponry. Their legal position was regularised by official letters of marque under the royal warrant by late May.<sup>7</sup>

As the siege of Londonderry tightened in June the sea route was temporarily severed by the boom raised across the River Foyle.<sup>8</sup> The combined efforts however of those determined masters sailing out from the Clyde and their compatriots working from Whitehaven, undoubtedly saved the city and the Protestant cause in Ulster.<sup>9</sup> During that summer only a few Glasgow merchants found the nerve to venture an armed vessel to

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<sup>5</sup> *RPC*, XIII, successive entries pp. 413-450.

<sup>6</sup> These letters were granted in lieu of personal loss at the hands of Jacobites to Captains William Burnside of the doggar *Vine* of Londonderry (40 tons) and Andrew Douglas of the *Ph[o]enix* of Culrairie (50 tons). A third privateer, an un-named vessel of Irish/ Scottish ownership under the Irvine skipper John Woodsyde, joined them in the same month.; *RPC*, XIII, pp. 386-388. A fuller discussion on the legality of the two types of commission in the Scottish context is available in; E.J. Graham, 'Privateering - the Scottish Experience', (unpublished M.A. dissertation, University of Exeter, 1979), pp. 2-4.

<sup>7</sup> *RPC*, XIII, pp. 395-7, 29/30 May 1689. The Ulsterman Burnside also held a commission from the Post Master General to act as courier to the commander of the armed forces in Ireland.

<sup>8</sup> The *Elizabeth* of Culrairie, Captain William Boyd, arrived at Saltcoats on the Firth of Clyde with the last evacuees and returning with forty volunteers to Londonderry.

<sup>9</sup> The *Phoenix* had the distinction, in company with the *Mountjoy*, of breaking the boom in late July with 800 bolls of Scottish meal for the starving garrison, *Ibid*, pp. 396 and 406.



Ulster with supplies.<sup>10</sup> The rest of the Clyde fleet stayed in port for fear of capture by the three French men-of-war known to be at Carrickfergus. This French squadron was then preparing to ferry a large Jacobite force of 1,200 men across the North Channel to Skye and Mull from where they could link up with Claverhouse in the Highlands.

That June (1689) the two armed cruisers fitted out for the defence of the Clyde finally put to sea with orders to co-operate with the small English naval squadron cruising off the coast of Northern Ireland under Commodore Rooke on *HMS Dartmouth* (265 tons/ 32 guns).<sup>11</sup> While searching for Rooke in the North Channel, they duly fell in with the French squadron carrying 400 soldiers to Skye. They apparently mistook them for the English frigates and closed to within hailing distance. At such a range there was no possibility of escape and the contest between vastly ill-matched adversaries resulted in the sinking of the *Jannet* and the capture of the *Pelican* with great loss of life. Of the crew of the *Pelican*, only thirty survived to be taken prisoner and eventually ransomed.<sup>12</sup> The loss of these guard ships left the Clyde and the west coast defenceless at a time when naval events in the English Channel were to open the way north for the French privateering squadrons.

### **The outrages perpetrated by English warships and privateers in Scottish waters**

On the same day (10 July 1690) that William triumphed at the Battle of the Boyne in Ireland, the Anglo-Dutch fleets were defeated by the combined French Mediterranean and Brest fleets off Beachy Head. The English Channel was now open

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<sup>10</sup> Two vessels which did make a passage were the *Mayflower* of Irvine (tonnage and armaments unknown) and the *Prosperitie* of Glasgow (45 tons/ 4 guns) captained respectively by Hugh Brown and William Adair; *ibid*, pp. 451 and 555.

<sup>11</sup> Rooke's squadron - *Dartmouth*, the *Bonadventure* and the *Swallow* - was ordered to cruise the North Channel after escorting the transports conveying Major General Kirke's relief force. His instruction was to prevent 'any insult from the French and Scottish [presumably Jacobite] privateers'.

<sup>12</sup> British Library, *Broadside*, a contemporary news sheet (London, 1689) which was, at the time of researching, unlisted and bound with *London Gazette* for that year. The *Pelican* was used by the Jacobites to land a group of officers on Mull before she was audaciously recaptured in Dublin Bay by the yacht *HMS Monmouth*, (now Sir) Clowdisley Shovell commanding; *London Gazette*, 19 April 1690. She was not returned and was probably sunk as a breakwater off Sheerness.



for the French army to attempt an invasion of the south coast to re-install James II in London. To meet this emergency Sir Cloudisley Shovell's squadron was recalled from the Irish Sea leaving the North Channel uncontested. To fill this gap William III found it expedient to sanction a permanent English naval presence in Scottish waters to deny the Scottish Jacobites further seaborne reinforcements from Ireland.

In the vanguard was *HMS Dartmouth*, released from the Irish station to cruise the west coast of Scotland. Her master Captain Pottinger was the forerunner of the new generation of naval officers who clearly took their orders from the English Admiralty whilst in Scottish waters. Their high-handed behaviour would spark off a series of challenges to the competence of the Scottish Admiralty and, by implication, to the integrity of the sovereignty of an independent Scotland.

A month prior to the arrival of *HMS Dartmouth* relations between the two Admiralties had been strained by an incident in the English Channel. It was a relatively minor affair, but one which serves to highlight the English establishment's lack of concern for Scottish interests at sea and their suspicion as to the loyalty of Scots found voyaging abroad. The incident involved the detention the *Barbara* of Irvine whilst conveying Sir Robert Barclay and family to the spa at Bath. This party were roughly handled as suspected Jacobites by the English frigate which re-captured the *Barbara* from a French privateer sailing under a letter of marque from James in exile. The Scottish Privy Council took up the case with the English Admiralty but received little satisfaction.<sup>13</sup>

With national sensibilities already aroused, Pottinger's actions were to be highly abrasive in two distinct ways. Firstly, he exploited his position as the only effective naval force in the Clyde to requisition two vessels to make up a flotilla. One was a newly completed frigate design hull, the *Lark*, which he placed under the command of the Ulsterman Andrew Douglas, and the second, the armed sloop *Lamb* of Glasgow

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<sup>13</sup> A. McJannet, *The Royal Burgh of Irvine* (Edinburgh 1938), pp. 251-2. A similar fate also befell the *Concord* of Glasgow; *RPC*, XVI, p. 75.



(100 tons/ 20 guns) he placed under the command of the Scotsman, Ninian Gibson.<sup>14</sup> Pottinger also demanded, and got, six months credit from the Glasgow baillies for supplies, as well as the services of four Clyde pilots, fifty seaman and the recently ransomed lieutenant of the *Pelican*. Turning his crew ashore to intimidate the local inhabitants seems to have expedited matters in his favour.<sup>15</sup> Although there is no evidence that he pressed Scottish sailors into his service, his conduct verged on near total disregard for the authority of the Scottish Admiralty. It was his activities in Scottish waters however that brought him into open conflict with the Scottish establishment sitting in Edinburgh.

In the few months he was on station, prior to his death, Pottinger succeeded in breaking the fragile understanding over the conduct of English warships in Scottish waters. In addition to raiding Skye, where he burnt the house of Donald Macdonald, he took it upon himself to enforce the English trade monopoly to the colonial trade (enshrined in the English Navigation Acts) on all Irish and Scottish vessels he encountered. Storm-bound and war-damaged Irish and English vessels in from the Atlantic seeking shelter in the Clyde, without first declaring in an English entrepot, were seized along with the illicitly trading Scottish merchant men.<sup>16</sup> In his determination to secure them as lawful prize, to his own financial advantage, Pottinger arranged for them to be escorted to an English port in blatant disregard of the jurisdiction of the Scottish Admiralty Prize Court.

The Privy Council of Scotland retorted that it was, 'ane unheard off practique too secure Scottish merchant vessels without any just pretence'.<sup>17</sup> Their immediate response

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<sup>14</sup> *RPC*, XV, p.180, XIII pp. 434 and 450. The Scottish Privy Council belated added their seal of approval to the *Lamb* quasi-naval role by granting her letter of marque (4 May 1691), 'to take, seize upon, and apprehend and in the case of resistance to fyre, sink or destroy the shippes and goods of the French, Irish or Scottish highlands in rebellion'; *ibid*, XVI, p.277.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, , XIII, p. 504. Aberdeen provided twenty of the seamen under the direction of a committee set up by the Privy Council.

<sup>16</sup> *HMS Dartmouth* was lost off Mull that October along with most of her crew including Pottinger. Her wreck has since been the subject of a major investigation; C.J.M. Bell, 'The *Dartmouth*, a British frigate wrecked off Mull 1690', *International Journal of Nautical Archaeology and Underwater Exploration*, VII (1978), pp. 29-58.

<sup>17</sup> *RPC*, XV, p. 384.



was to impound the prizes as they were being convoyed south by the *Lark* pronouncing that 'prizes must be tried in the jurisdiction of the Admiral of where the prize lies - Scotland'. A diplomatic note of their displeasure was also relayed to the London Admiralty with the request that Pottinger should be disciplined:

acquaint him it is their opinion that no ships in Scotts harbours can be summarily seized by ane order of England. Scotland being ane independent nation, but if England have any pretences to ships in Scotts harbours, the same shall be fairly and legally tried.<sup>18</sup>

In their subsequent correspondence with the Lord High Admiral of England (the Earl of Nottingham) such complaints against English commanders became a regular feature. In April 1691 Captain Roope on *HMS Sheerness*, without consulting the Scottish Admiralty, attempted to seize a neutral - the *Emanuel* of Flensburg - in Leith Roads on a charge of carrying contraband.<sup>19</sup> This simmering dispute between the Admiralties erupted again in June of that year. The incident was the piratical behaviour of Captain Ivory (or Evory) of the English vessel *Pembroke* 'frigate' who attacked the *John* of Greenock as she entered the Clyde from Bilbao, before going on to terrorise the whole firth. Ivory, it was claimed:

did summarily seize the said ship by way of fact and force, shooting great guns at the said ship and putting out their majesties flag; and having turned out the waiters put in by the custom office....did also violently seize and possess himself of three gabards or lighters that were sailing up the water....refusing to show any warrant or commission for such a procedure, but, on the contrary threatening to throw the surveyor of New Port Glasgow overboard...<sup>20</sup>

'Communicating with the enemy' was the other pretence used by the masters of English warships on the Scottish station to seize a Scottish vessel as prize. In 1690 the yacht

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18 Ibid, p. 590.

19 J. Grant, *The Old Scots Navy* (London, 1914), p. 101.

20 *RPC*, XV, pp. 329-30.



*HMS Monmouth* took the *Mary* of Glasgow prize for carrying letters from James II to Lord Melville.<sup>21</sup> This was at a time when virtually the entire English establishment was openly in communication with James.

One of the difficulties facing the Scottish handling of this situation had been the lack of an effective administrative head at the Scottish Admiralty. William, prior to his departure on military campaigns, had deemed the office of the High Lord Admiral of Scotland vacant. In the interim the Lord Commissioners of the Scottish Privy Council acted where necessary until the Duke of Hamilton received the gift of the office in 1692.<sup>22</sup> In 1693 however their combined authority was powerless to check an English privateer cruising the Firth of Forth stopping and searching, with impunity, passing traders for possible contraband.<sup>23</sup> More sinister was the behaviour of a Scottish-owned privateer - *Elizabeth* of Argyll (70 tons/ 16 guns/ 80 men) - property of the Duke of Argyll. Acting under the authority of English letters, its predatory master, Hugh Campbell, boarded and detained incoming Scottish vessels entering the Clyde, sending those with cargoes suspected of breaching the English Navigation Acts south for condemnation.<sup>24</sup>

### **The elevation of the sovereignty issue to the political agenda**

Such was the gravity of the situation that a direct appeal was made, in William's absence, to the Queen. The test case was over the actions of an English privateer - *Countess* of London - whose master ransacked another Flensburg vessel while in the

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21 *RPC*, XV, p. 147.

22 William Dundas, advocate, had been gifted the office of Judge Admiral in December 1690. The Duke of Hamilton was the Lord High Admiral from March 1692 until his death in April 1694. Thereafter the Scottish Privy Council was effectively in control of such affairs until January 1697.

23 After 1691 the records of the Privy Council are held as unedited manuscript; SRO, PC, 1/49, 24, 8 May 1693.

24 SRO, PC 1/48, 530, 10 June and 27 December 1692. Her English letter of marque was the only one granted to a Scottish vessel out of a total issue of 490, which would suggest that this practice was stopped thereafter; PRO HCA 26/1-3



Forth and the second English vessel to board a neutral that month. When ordered to restore his plunder he sailed away and had to be chased by *HMS Sweepstake* commanded by the redoubtable Andrew Douglas. Douglas was now a commissioned naval officer in what was, to all intents and purposes, an English navy. Having caught up with the privateer, he extracted an agreement with its master to submit to judicial proceedings on berthing in the Thames, thus placing himself under English Admiralty jurisdiction.<sup>25</sup> As a result the Admiralty in London was forced to pronounce on the competence of the Scottish Admiralty to hear cases relating to incidents that had occurred within its maritime jurisdiction.

The Queen's reply to her Scottish Privy Councillors that August was both placatory and assertive:

til now that the business was determined in the Court of our [English] Admiralty we could make no return to yours, but now, by admitting your plea to return the ship to be judged there in our Admiralty of Scotland, you may be well satisfied of our care and concern we take of the rights, immunities and honour of our ancient Kingdom as well as of its wealth and trade.<sup>26</sup>

The immunities and honour that the Queen referred to were the other outstanding grievances of the Scottish maritime community; namely, the press-ganging of her sailors by passing English warships and the rough handling frequently meted out to Scottish ships driven in distress into the Channel ports. With regard to the first issue the succession of William and Mary had rendered void the old levy system of providing Scottish seaman for the Stuart navy. This however was used as justification for English naval commanders to resort to the press-gang to make up their complements. The worst

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<sup>25</sup> SRO, PC 1/49, 106-9, 29 June 1693.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 1/49, 117, 19 August. 1693.



years were 1690-2 when the London press-gangs took to preying on Scottish vessels entering the Thames.<sup>27</sup>

The second issue, the rough handling of Scottish crews in English ports, can best be illustrated by the case of the *James* of Glasgow. Having survived attacks from enemy privateers during a winter passage to the Canaries this vessel was stranded in Porthleven, Cornwall, where the local inhabitants looted her cargo and rig and stripped her crew 'naked'.<sup>28</sup> Scottish protestations made at the time proved futile.

In general the Queen's letter was a satisfactory, if not decisive, reply to a specific set of Scottish grievances. It did not however resolve the conflicting and, at times, ambiguous views held by the two nations on the fundamental issue of the inviolability of Scottish maritime sovereignty. To defuse this situation a commission was sent north to 'interrogate witnesses' and to put the questions, 'whither or not Scotland be a free nation independent of the kingdom of England and whether or not the Admiralty of Scotland be a supreme court independent of England?'.<sup>29</sup> Such opposing perceptions of the legality of the Scottish claims of superior jurisdiction manifested themselves in the collision of national interests over the ill-fated Darien Scheme.

By the time of the receipt of the Queen's letter, the friction between the two nations appeared to be easing with the removal of the immediate security threat to the Protestant Succession. Ireland had been re-conquered and pacified, for the time being, by the Treaty of Limerick whilst the death of Claverhouse at Killiecrankie had left the Scottish Jacobites without an effective military leader in Scotland. Only the handful of rebels defiantly holding out on the strategically positioned Bass Rock in the Forth symbolised the armed struggle for the Jacobite cause in the lowlands.

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<sup>27</sup> *RPC* records a number of petitions for the release of Scottish crews pressed at London around this time, e.g., petition by David Wood, master of the *Bonadventure* of Montrose, to have his crew released in February 1690; *ibid*, XV, p.78.

<sup>28</sup> GCA, Shawfield MSS 1/82a; sworn declaration by crew taken by Glasgow magistrates, 28 May 1694. The *Christian* of Anstruther, Captain Smith, had a similar experience when brought into Tinmouth; University of Edinburgh Library, Laing Manuscript, II, 490/1, as quoted by Smout, *Scottish Trade*, p. 67.

<sup>29</sup> SRO, PC 1/49, 117, 26 September. 1693.



## The impact of the onslaught of French privateers in Scottish waters

At sea, the French naval advantage gained at Beachy Head was short-lived with the heavy losses suffered by Tourville's grand fleet at the Battle of Barfleur. This defeat, together with the crippling losses sustained at La Hogue, amounted to a national disaster for the French which ended any prospect of a French-led invasion across the English Channel. By mid-1693 the remnants of their navy were demoralised and blockaded in their home ports.

Thereafter the offensive role passed to her privateers. In the vanguard were the St. Malo and Dunkirk squadrons led by the legendary exponents of the *guerre-de-course* - Bart, Forbin and Duguay-Trouin. Under their leadership the war at sea entered a new phase that again placed Scotland in the forefront of the struggle. The small French privateer 'capers' [ex-fishing craft] that had first pestered the north-east coast and Orkney in the summer of 1690, were now joined by the hunting packs led by French ex-naval units on hire to these privateering 'admirals'.<sup>30</sup> The first such large flotilla of enemy privateers raided Orkney waters (June 1693) and would have been entirely successful in their designs had not the timely arrival of *HMS Centurion* and *Kingfisher* scattered them, taking nine of their number in the process.<sup>31</sup>

As the fighting strength of these French squadrons rapidly increased they were willing and able to attack naval escorts in order to capture whole convoys.<sup>32</sup> Their cruising pattern was to sweep the North Sea, from Norwegian as well as French bases, to intercept the returning Baltic and White Sea convoys. The response of the allied navies was to gather off the Belgian coast to entrap the returning privateers with their prizes. To frustrate this counter-move the French privateers often went north-about around Scotland at the end of the foray. This gave them the opportunity to raid the

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<sup>30</sup> *RPC*, XV, p. 338.

<sup>31</sup> *London Gazette*, 12 August. 1693.

<sup>32</sup> Between 1688-97 St. Malo privateers alone captured 3,384 merchant men and 162 escorting men-of-war; D. Macintyre, *The Privateers* (London, 1975), p. 83.



Dutch Spitzbergen whalers, the Atlantic traders and herring fleets that marshalled in Orkney before returning home via the western approaches.

Scottish renegades provided many of the pilots and masters of the enemy privateers that worked closer inshore during this period. In one incident in 1694, a shore party of five seaman under a lieutenant from a French privateer, lying off Stranraer, were caught and all found to be renegades.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, by 1697 the Scottish Privy Council felt it necessary to issue a proclamation outlawing any such association with the enemy.

### **The Forth guard ships 1690-6**

It was anticipated that the east coast would bear the brunt of these assaults and as early as 1690 the Scottish Privy Council had commissioned three guard ships to protect the Forth. In keeping with the scale of the problem, as then perceived and learning from the fate of the *Pelican* and *Jannet*, the vessels selected were much larger ex-merchantmen. They were - the *Red Lyon* (200 tons/ 14 guns); the *James* of Queensferry (190 tons/ 6 guns); and the *Providence* of Kirkcaldy (160 tons/ 12 guns).<sup>34</sup> The additional need to cut off the supplies run by the French privateers to the rebels on the Bass Rock, brought the *Lamb* of Glasgow (100 tons/ 20 guns) round from the Clyde to cruise in company of the *Providence*.<sup>35</sup> As enemy activity surged in 1693, the *Lyon* (200 tons/ 20 guns/ 48 men) joined the two Bass Rock blockade ships for that winter.<sup>36</sup>

What seemed a formidable force was, in fact, only a deterrent against the smaller French privateers. When the supplying of the Bass rebels was taken up by the powerful French ex-naval frigates - the *Railleuse* (42 guns) and *Sauvage* (20 guns) - under the command of Scottish renegade Robert Dunbar (ex-tidewaiter for the Forth); the guard

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33 SRO, PC 1/50, 21, 11 October. 1694.

34 *RPC*, XV, p. 75.

35 *Ibid*, pp. 311-13.

36 *Ibid*, p. 358.



ships prudently stayed in port. Neither did they cruise outside the Forth, thereby allowing Dunbar the option to go north-about after his visit to the Forth in June 1693, terrorising Orkney by attacking houses as well as ships on his way.<sup>37</sup>

The inadequacies of deploying armed merchantmen against such formidable forces was plainly evident. The Duke of Hamilton addressed the Scottish Parliament on the matter that very year, as did the King's letter to the Committee of Trade. Both dwelled on the pressing need to find a solution to the privateering menace as the naval intelligence for the following season painted an even bleaker forecast:

We have received information from prisoners that the French do not intend to set out their grand fleet this year, but would have many cruisers abroad, of greater force than formerly, that will sail two together and far exceed the strength of the guard ships.<sup>38</sup>

In the face of such dire warnings the only viable solution was the deployment of comparable naval ratters in Scottish waters. The sole naval unit then regularly stationed in the north was *HMS Dolphin* which cruised the Western Isles bombarding castles when not 'fishing for plate from an old wreck in the North Sea'.<sup>39</sup> The prospect of concentrations of English warships gathering in the firths of Clyde and Forth, at a time when the behaviour of her privateers was a bone of contention between their lordships in London and Edinburgh, was not politically acceptable. The alternative, the acquisition of a Scottish navy was, however, too heavy a burden for such a weak economy.

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<sup>37</sup> Dunbar had been the master of the Forth customs boat in 1688. His knowledge of the Forth was, therefore, considerable. His raid on Orkney is mentioned in : J. S. Bromley, 'Jacobite Privateers in the Nine Years War', *Statesmen, Scholars and Merchants* (Oxford 1972), p. 25.

<sup>38</sup> *Calendar of State Papers, domestic series*, p. 424, (Dublin Castle report, 13 April 1695).

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, p. 415.



## The creation of the 'Scots Navy'

The limitations of the Scottish public purse necessitated a compromise between financial expediency and political independence. Estimates undertaken in April and May 1695 put the cost of a navy of three or four frigates at between £24,000 and £36,000 pounds sterling.<sup>40</sup> The request to their sovereign for the procurement of men-of-war to protect their coasts was therefore a qualified one:

It may please your Majesty to order two English fifth or sixth rate frigates...for our security and if his majesty will lend us the ships we will furnish and pay the men, for there is a necessity that the ship be subject to our orders, lest otherwise they trouble our merchant ships...

Added to this plea was a request to check the predatory behaviour of English privateers in the north 'and we hope his Majesty will give orders that no commissions shall be given by the Admiralty of England to trouble ships within our waters, specially ships belonging to our merchants'.<sup>41</sup> The ambiguity of this last phrase may well have been intentional so as to embrace the delicate matter of Scottish privateers obtaining English letters to prey on their own merchant men; as the *Elizabeth* of Argyll had done that year.

This request was granted and three naval hulls of a rating sufficient to deter the new generation of privateer were fitted-out at London in 1696.<sup>42</sup> The commissioning of Scottish skippers was more than a diplomat expedient as the lack of Admiralty coastal charts for the North meant that local knowledge was essential.

Control of their own defences did not however signal the end of seizures of Scottish merchantmen by the avaricious commanders of English warships in northern waters. The combination of personal gain and higher allegiance was particularly

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40 Ibid, p. 428.

41 SRO, PC 1/58, 650-1, 20 March 1693.

42 Their upkeep was essentially that outlined by the original proposal made by the Scottish Parliament.



Table: 2.1 The vessels and masters of the Scots Navy of 1703.

*Royal William* 5th rate/ 367 tons admiralty/ 32 guns/ 145 men Captain Edward Burd (previously of the guard ship *Lyon*)<sup>43</sup>

*Royal Mary* 6th rater/ 284 tons admiralty/ 24 guns/ 115 men Captain Bosswell, (previously Special Commissioner and captain of the guard ship *Providence*)

*Dumbarton Castle* 6th rater/ tonnage unknown/ 24 guns/ 115 men Captain George Lyon (previously master of the West Indiaman *Walter* of Glasgow).

Source: SRO, PC 1/53, 1-18, successive entries June to July 1703; tonnage details: Clowes, *The Royal Navy*.

evident in the actions of the Right Honourable Archibald, Lord Hamilton, commander of *HMS Litchfield*. He took the *Ann* of Kirkcaldy with a cargo of French wine off the Shetlands (1696) and sent her direct to Great Yarmouth to avoid tangling with the Scottish Admiralty, which was known to tolerate such trade with the enemy.<sup>44</sup> A similar fate befell the *Kath[e]rine* of Dysart when she was taken prize (1697) by *HMS Woolwich*.<sup>45</sup>

Confrontation between the English and Scottish naval services flared even within the confines of the upper Forth, when *HMS Nonsuch* fired on the *Royal William* for not dipping her flag in deference to the English navy; 'the [Scottish] Admiralty here can hardly believe it, yet Burd says that some of them shot sharp [muskets] at him, as he came down the river'.<sup>46</sup> This act, more than another since this Pottinger's excesses in the Clyde, served to indicate the extent to which English naval captains had perceived their unspoken licence to flaunt their contempt at Scotland's maritime pretensions. Fortunately, the cessation of hostilities (with the Treaty of Ryswick) deferred further escalation of this type of behaviour as the Scottish navy was immediately de-commissioned and laid up.

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<sup>43</sup> Burd had been the captain of the *Charles* of Leith captured earlier by Dunkirk privateers. Members of the Burd family feature regularly in Leith history of this period.

<sup>44</sup> The confessions of her crewmen to her illegal direct run to France stated that she was 'hired to go to St. Sebastian but, instead the ship sailed directly to Bordeaux'; PRO HCA, 32/33,6. She was described as a Dutch built doggar (40 tons), at least twenty years old.

<sup>45</sup> SRO, PC 1/51, 94, 20 January 1697.

<sup>46</sup> As quoted by Grant, *Old Scots Navy*, p. 209.



## The Darien Scheme

The conflict of national interests was now to focus on the events surrounding the ill-fated Darien Scheme. This grandiose and morale-boosting plan to catapult the independent nation of Scotland into the same league as her neighbour was born out of the national frustrations that built-up during the early war years. The Committee of Trade met in 1693 to finalise their recommendations for the promotion of Scottish Merchant Adventurer Companies, just as English outrages against the Scottish maritime interest were becoming all too blatant and oppressive. By June 1694 the Scottish Parliament had passed the fateful *Act for Encouraging of Forraign Trade* which mimicked the established English model by offering 'letters patent' to any company that sought to trade to the colonial world. As before, Africa was the preferred area owing to the weak position of the English Royal African Company and the dubious allurements of the slave trade.

The timing of the launch of Scotland's bid for trading parity was wholly inopportune. The death of Queen Mary, late in 1694, removed a moderating hand in Anglo-Scottish affairs at this most delicate stage. Furthermore events in England conspired to defer, for a short time, any immediate backlash to the Scottish formation of a merchant adventurer company. Firstly, there was the change in the English administration as the incoming young whig *junta* paid little attention, in their ardour to prosecute the King's European war, to the indepth resentment fomenting in the North. Secondly, William's absence abroad leading his military campaign extended the period of indecision in London.

When William finally returned from his victory at Namur, in 1695, he was met by the mobilised wrath of the English merchant interest, principally those of the East Indies and Africa companies.<sup>47</sup> By then the creation of the 'Company of Scotland

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<sup>47</sup> The insecurity was also heightened by the fact that the East India Company's charter was due for renewal.



trading to Africa and the Indies', empowered for thirty one years to make treaties and plant colonies, was well advanced. The English lobby immediately pressed for, and secured, a new Navigation Act (1696) which finally closed the remaining access loopholes of the 1664 Act and confirmed the territorial exclusiveness of the English chartered companies monopolies. Under their threat of further sanctions the subscription list to the Scottish Company in London was closed and withdrawn.

The severity of this backlash surprised many Scots, as evident in the reaction of Sir James Ogilvy, Secretary of State for Scotland at the time; 'I am sorry our Indian Act occasions so much trouble; for I think it will do little hurt to England seeing that we want [for] a fleet'.<sup>48</sup> His comment underlines the fact the Scottish marine was then quite incapable of attempting a serious assault on the preserve of others, as things stood.<sup>49</sup> Indeed, as one learned opinion has since concluded, out of the stock recorded in the *Register of 1692*, only fifteen vessels were of ocean-going size.<sup>50</sup> Of these none were remotely comparable with the large East Indiamen of the English Companies, many of which were seconded to the Royal Navy during the war years.

Measured against this indigenous stock of 1692, the purchasing of three very large and two smaller hulls from Dutch and Hamburg yards for the Company of Scotland represented a virtual doubling of Scotland's foreign-going tonnage. The brief given to the company's agents (Alexander Stevenson of Edinburgh and James Gibson of Glasgow) was to enquire after the purchase of 'five or six ships of about of 600 tons each ...fit for voyages to the East Indies'. The vessels - the *St. Andrew* (originally the *Instauration*); the *Hope*; the *Caledonia*; the *Unicorn*; the *Rising Sun*; and the *Dolphin* - were purchased over two years and fitted out with heavy armments at Amsterdam and Hamburg.<sup>51</sup> All such preparations were dutifully reported by Sir Paul Rycout, then

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48 *Carstares State Papers and Letters* (1774), 10 December 1695 as quoted by Grant, *Old Scots Navy*, p. 270.

49 The introduction gives analysis of the shipping listed in the *Register of 1692*.

50 W.C. Dickinson and G.S. Pryde, *A New History of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1962), II, p. 74.

51 While an exact contemporary list of the new company vessels, as opposed to those hired, does not exist, they can be identified from the substantial documentation that survives from this venture. For catalogue of surviving



residing in Hamburg, to the appropriate English ministers, Sir William Trumbull (Secretary of State) and William Blaythwayt (the Secretary-at-War).<sup>52</sup>

The fact that the Scottish Admiralty ordered Burd on the *Royal William* to convey the commissioning crew of the *Caledonia* (600 tons) from Leith to Hamburg and to escort her back, along with the *Instauration* (350 tons/ 70 guns), speaks volumes as to both the involvement and benevolent attitude of the Scottish establishment to this venture. It also suggests that there was a real apprehension as to the possibility of a pre-emptive strike by the armed East Indiamen of the English chartered companies.<sup>53</sup>

The series of calamities that followed the first fleet's departure for the Isthmus of Panama from Rothesay Bay (July 1698) and the second fleet's sailing from Greenock (September 1699) have been fully recounted by Pratt Insh drawing from the substantial records of the company.<sup>54</sup> Suffice to say, William's desperate need to maintain the fragile Peace of Ryswick with Spain led him to abandon the colonists and ignore the 'raging madmen' at home, as he described the supporters of the scheme.<sup>55</sup> His absolute displeasure manifested itself in his proclamation to all English colonies in the Americas to deny succour to any of the survivors from the abandoned colony. This proclamation, following hard on the first full reports of the horrors endured by the colonists from tenacious Spanish attacks and the ravages of disease, embittered Scottish public opinion and created a sense of treachery in Anglo-Scottish relations.

The loss was more than just the sacrifice of the best Scotland had to offer in seamen, vessels and capital. It was a disaster that shook the collective confidence of Scottish society to its core. Of the thirteen company vessels that crossed the Atlantic in

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documentation see; G.P. Insh, *Papers relating to the ships and voyages of the Company of Scotland Trading to Africa and the Indies* (Edinburgh 1924). Also by the same author, *The Darien Scheme* (London, 1947).

<sup>52</sup> Insh, *Papers relating to the ships*, pp. 6- 48. Successive reports 10 August 1696 to 12 November 1697. The company agents were also empowered to negotiate for a free port status with the Hanse Towns without King William's authorisation.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, p. 57. 'Instructions from the Company to Captain Tennant on the *Caledonia*, 20 August 1697'.

<sup>54</sup> The location of the settlement at 'New Caledonia' was ill conceived as the climate was unhealthy and it was within reach of Spanish forces. Earlier proposals to colonise a part of Spanish Florida may have reduced such risks considerably.

<sup>55</sup> The comment was made to Heinsus; G. Clerk, *The Later Stuarts 1660-1714* (Oxford, 1955) p. 285.



the two forlorn expeditions only three returned to the Clyde - the *Caledonia*, *Hopeful Binning* and *Speedy Return*.<sup>56</sup>

Table: 2.2 The vessels of the Darien Scheme and their fate.

Vessels	Master	Fate	
First fleet	<i>St Andrew</i>	Andrew Pennicuik (Commodore)	abandoned at Fort Royal
	<i>Unicorn</i>	Robert Pinkerton	abandoned at New York
	<i>Caledonia</i>	Robert Drummond	returned to Scotland and sold
	<i>Endeavour</i>	Malloch	abandoned at New York
	<i>Dolphin</i>	?	castaway at Cartagena
Relief ships	<i>Dispatch</i>	Andrew Gibson	wrecked outgoing on Western Isles
	<i>Hopeful Binning</i>	Alexander Stark	hired Bo'ness vessel returned with evacuees
	<i>Olive Branch</i>	William Jameson	destroyed by fire at Darien
Second fleet	<i>Rising Sun</i>	James Gibson	wrecked on Charleston bar in hurricane
	<i>Hope</i>	James Millar	castaway on rocks at Colorados, Cuba
	<i>Hope</i>	Richard Dalling	hired Bo'ness vessel sold at Cartagena
	<i>Duke of Hamilton</i>	Walter Duncan	hired vessel wrecked on Charleston bar in hurricane
	<i>Speedy Return</i>	?	returned to Scotland

Source: G.P. Insh, *Papers relating to the ships and voyages of the Company of Scotland*

The Company of Scotland simply did not have the in-depth resources or the political allies to recover from such a disaster. All their subsequent attempts to recoup losses, with one exception, the voyage of the *African Merchant* to West Africa (returning in July 1700), proved futile. In that year the Company marshalled its remaining capital and few hulls for two small scale, high risk ventures into the eastern trading preserve of the English chartered companies. Sailing under the Articles of Agreement (validated by the Company's letters patent) one venture deployed the ship *Speedwell* (250 tons), John Campbell, on a direct voyage from Port Glasgow to China in early 1701.<sup>57</sup> The other project involved the dispatch of two authorised company vessels from the Clyde for Africa - the ship *Speedy Return*, Robert Drummond (late of the *Caledonia*) and brigantine *Content*, Alexander Stewart.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>56</sup> The *Caledonia*, at 600 tons, was the largest of the company vessels and was later sold to William Arbuckle of Glasgow on her return to the Clyde. Arbuckle later (sometime around 1710) sold her to Francis Collins of London who re-named her the *Reviver* in her new role as a government contract naval stores ship.

<sup>57</sup> Insh, *Papers relating to the ships*, pp. 231-7. Sailing Instructions, 12 December 1700.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, pp. 245-248.



Both ventures, despite the triumph of their safe navigation to their declared destinations, came to an ignominious end in foreign ports. The *Speedwell* having twice been driven back by typhoons from the final approaches to Macao was brought into a haven in the Straits of Malacca where she was careened and her severely damaged hull, masts and rigging repaired. As fate would have it, having survived the worst of the China seas, the vessel was wrecked on a prominent rock in the harbour while being refloated. The super-cargo blamed 'our ignorant, self-willed and obstinate commander' for deliberately sending ashore the more competent chief mate during the operation.<sup>59</sup> The loss of the *Speedy Return* and *Content* was also put down to their captains' negligence as both vessels were boarded and taken by pirates while their masters were entertained ashore in the notorious harbour of the Isle of St. Mary's (off Madagascar).<sup>60</sup>

Such intrusions into the preserve of the great English Merchant Adventurer Companies did not go unnoticed. In the year of their departure the English 'Lord Commissioners for Trade and the Plantations' belatedly sought the opinion of the Attorney and Solicitor Generals in London as to 'how far Scotchmen were aliens' in their role as shipmasters in the plantation trades. Their reply was probably not what was expected; 'we are of the opinion that a Scotchman is to be accounted, as an Englishman, within the [Navigation] act, every Scotchman being a natural born subject'.<sup>61</sup> This learned opinion was however studiously overlooked by those in authority in England in the years that followed.

### **The resumption of war and the impending schism with England**

This unresolved issue was inherited by Anne on her succession to the British throne in March 1702. Her policy was to continue to support the autonomy of

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid, pp. 241, correspondence from the supercargo Robert Innes.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, pp. xii-xv.

<sup>61</sup> G. Chalmers, *Opinions of Eminent Lawyers* (London, 1814), I, pp. 361-3.



Scotland's maritime institutions and her trading aspirations. By May of that year, war was resumed with France and her new ally Spain.<sup>62</sup> It is therefore an irony of fate that had the Scottish venture against the Spanish possession of Panama been launched during this war, it would have probably been well received by their monarch and her English subjects. As it was the remnants of the Scottish marine left in home waters required protection from the French privateer squadrons which the resumption of war would inevitably unleash. To this end the guard ships *Royal Mary* and *Dumbarton Castle* were duly re-fitted at Chatham at the expense of the Crown and were back on their Scottish stations by July 1703 under the command of Thomas Gordon and Matthew Campbell respectively.

These naval warships were commissioned by the Scottish Admiralty too late to deter the cruise of Duguay-Trouin's squadron round Orkney in the autumn of the previous year. The Dutch whaling fleet was the target of his assault which, being unopposed, would have been entirely successful had not a severe storm scattered the pack. Only three prizes were taken - two of which were subsequently wrecked on the Scottish coast.<sup>63</sup> Undeterred, French privateers were back in the same area the following spring and caught the entire Dutch herring fleet and naval escorts in Bressay Sound (Lerwick). A battle ensued in which the Dutch Admiral's frigate, the *Wolfswinkel*, was blown up and almost the entire fleet of herring busses captured and burned (c.150 vessels). A few were spared to carry the stranded crews back to Holland.<sup>64</sup> This event set back the Dutch exploitation of the Scottish fisheries which had been relatively undisturbed since the end of the Dutch Wars.

The cost to the Scottish purse of maintaining the frigates of the Scots Navy had been offset by allowing the two Forth cruisers laid up at Burntisland to be leased in

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<sup>62</sup> Queen Anne immediately moved to check the recurring press-gang problem by publically re-affirming her late father's order 'that our subjects of Scotland should not be impress[ed] from onboard Scots ships by the English for the sea service'; *Edinburgh Gazette*, 18 June 1702.

<sup>63</sup> Macintyre, *Privateers*, p. 101.

<sup>64</sup> J.R. Nicholson, *Lerwick Harbour*, (Lerwick 1987), p. 4. This estimate of Dutch losses is the most conservative as the *Statistical Account of Scotland* report of the parish of Lerwick puts a much higher figure (c.500).



March 1703, to their captains and business associates for separate armed ventures to the West Indies and Italy.<sup>65</sup> This act serves to indicate the degree to which the Scottish establishment had assumed ownership of these naval units under the Crown's benevolence. Such cost cutting exercises proved however to be a false economy as such arduous passages compounded the wear to the hulls accumulated from patrolling the Scottish seas. The more dilapidated *Royal William*, the flagship of the now Commodore Gordon, required a full survey before the decision was taken to re-fit and commission her in 1704.

In September 1705, she was joined by her consort the *Royal Mary*, now commanded by James Hamilton Junior of Orbiston, for convoy duty and protection of the east coast. The condition of the *Royal Mary's* hull was a matter of grave concern to those that sailed on her.<sup>66</sup> Henry Clerk, then a serving officer on board, alluded to her very poor condition in a bitter letter to his family (5 August 1706). In it he reported that during a fifteen hour chase of a French privateer found in Aberdeen Bay she sprung a leak and barely made it back to Leith with her prize.<sup>67</sup> After her arrival her pumps had to be continuously manned for seven days to stop her sinking. His correspondence also gives insights into the operations and internal politics of the Scots Navy at this critical time in the nation's history. The pursuit of the Frenchman, which took the *Royal Mary* 120 miles out into the North Sea, was in direct defiance of Commodore Gordon's prime orders, which were to keep the badly leaking 'thin shelled' *Royal Mary* within thirty miles of the shore and to avoid the risk of falling in with a French privateering squadron, then known to be off the Norwegian coast.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> *State Papers Domestic (Scotland)*, Warrant Books, xix, 6 Nov. 1703. Gordon on the *Royal Mary* captured the *Catherine* of Rotterdam (120 tons) *en route* from Tenerife with wine and brought her into Burntisland; SRO HCAS AC9/88, Gordon v Russell.

<sup>66</sup> Gordon took the credit for the capture of the Spanish privateer *Holy Trinity* of Ostend; SRO HCAS AC7/107 Register of Decrees, XII, entries, 22 June and 17 August 1705. Change of masters are noted by Grant, *Old Scots Navy*, p. 252. The capture of the *St. Andrew* by a Middelberg privateer the following year, was attributed to an act of reprisal in response to Gordon's zeal in taking a German vessel.

<sup>67</sup> The intruder was the *Angelica* of Havre de Grace (60 tons / 60 men/ 10 guns); SRO HCAS AC8/67, 9/185. For detailed billing of repairs carried out at Leith; *ibid*, AC 8/78 James Robertson (carpenter) v Hamilton.

<sup>68</sup> SRO, Clerk of Penicuik MSS, GD 18, 4136. Gordon, ever mindful of the possibility of prize money and glory had ordered the *Royal Mary* to stand out to seaward while the *Royal William* took the more probable inshore



These poorly maintained warships were, fortunately, hardly tested as the French privateering wolf-packs abandoned the North Sea for the new rich hunting grounds around the Iberian peninsula and the southern approaches that year. Indeed, it was not until 1707 that Forbin's squadron of large privateers reverted back to the old cruising pattern of rounding Scotland unopposed after they had cut up the incoming Moscovy Company convoy off Norway.<sup>69</sup> With this exception, the general lull in hostilities in northern waters at this time allowed the Scottish marine to revive while English and Dutch losses mounted in the south.

It was however during these years that Anglo-Scottish relations entered their darkest days as tit-for-tat legislation escalated the trade war to a constitutional crisis of sinister dimensions. The Scottish Parliament tried to redress their disadvantage by passing an Act legalising the importation of Madeira and French wines and liquors. This legislation broke with the Tory strategy of an economic blockade to defeat Spain and France which then held sway in the Queen's Council.

Still more damaging was the Scottish Act which forbade any future monarch from declaring war on behalf of Scotland without first gaining the consent of the Scottish Parliament. In the same year (1703) the supremely sensitive matter of the Hanoverian succession was challenged with the Scottish Act of Security, which prepared the way for the dissolution of the Union of the Crowns unless:

There be such conditions of government settled and enacted as may secure the honour and sovereignty of this Crown and kingdom, the freedom, frequency,

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course for interception. Clerk reckoned that Gordon took umbrage at Hamilton's success. I am grateful to Michael Dun for calling my attention to this letter.

<sup>69</sup> SRO, McPherson of Cluny MSS, GD 80/ 568; letter from William Niven regarding the Dunkirk squadrons off the Scottish coast and the capture of two Aberdeen vessels. On the west coast the *Dumbarton Castle*, Captain Matthew Campbell had a success that year taking the St. Malo privateer *St Peter and St. Paul*, Captain Jean Petit, and her prize the *Happy Entrance* of Dublin; SRO HCAS AC8/61 and AC 9/210 Campbell v Petit 1706. The year before Campbell had taken the French privateer *Aime Mary*; *ibid*, AC7/ 107, 24 July 1705. Convoying is illustrated by the case heard before the High Court of Admiralty of Scotland, in 1705, in which the owners of the *Antonia* of Leith sued their master, James Cuthbertson, for the cost of the vessel (£4000 Scots); which was taken by a French privateer owing to his delay in sailing and hence missing the convoy to London; SRO HCAS AC9/128 Pringle v Cuthbertson.



and power of parliament, the religion, freedom, and the trade of the nation, from English or any other foreign influence.<sup>70</sup>

A clause of this Act empowered the Scottish Parliament to muster every able-bodied man to form a national militia to prevent external interference in Scottish domestic affairs. The royal assent was, understandably, withheld by the Queen.

While the English Parliament set about drafting a retaliatory and proscriptive measure against the Scottish community and interest in London, the contest at sea resumed in earnest with the *Annandale* outrage. The Company of Scotland fitted out this armed merchantman (220 tons/ 20 guns/ 48 men) for a further voyage to the East Indies, ostensibly to retrieve the valuable cargo of the wrecked *Speedwell*. She sailed with letters of marque issued under the company patent and was commanded by John Ap-Rice, an English master later denounced by his Scottish employers as 'a rogue'.<sup>71</sup> In January 1704, on her maiden voyage, she was detained at the Downs and condemned as legal prize for intending to breach the monopoly of the English East India Company.

This private action, taken by agents of the English Company, would appear to have been sufficient to deter other would-be speculators from taking up with the Scottish Company thereafter. In the previous month, James, the Earl of Morton, had signed Articles of Agreement to send out his vessel, the *Morton* (100 tons/ 14 guns) to the East Indies but he was sufficiently prudent to cancel this scheme as she lay in the Thames. A similar scheme to outfit the *Hannah* galley, by the London merchant Ainsworth on behalf of the Company, would also appear to have been curtailed even though she lay at Burntisland out of reach of the English Companies.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> A general view of Anglo-Scottish antagonism is available in D. Defoe, *The History of the Union of Great Britain* (Edinburgh, 1709), pp. 141-5.

<sup>71</sup> *State Papers Domestic* (Scotland), XIX, 3 January 1704. A second letter of marque was issued (20 February 1704) against the French and Spanish to the *Alexander* galley of Queensferry, John Stewart. No information has come to hand to determine whether it was used or not.

<sup>72</sup> The *Morton* agreement was signed in December 1703; for reproduction see Insh *Darien Scheme*, pp.251-2. Ainsworth had the *Hannah* arrested for debts owed to him by the Scottish Company while awaiting his orders, SRO HCAS AC 9/183, Heggan v Ainsworth and Miller and AC10/25 (1706).



## The Worcester incident and the trial of Captain Green

Earlier, in December 1704, the myth of a possible peaceful co-existence of English and Scottish trading companies in the colonial world had been finally exploded when the Lord High Admiral of England openly sanctioned the seizure of all Scottish vessels found trading in breach of the English monopolies.<sup>73</sup> Retaliation was exacted that winter when the East Indiaman of the English 'Two Million Company' - the *Worcester*, Captain Thomas Green - put into Leith having rounded Scotland to avoid capture in the English Channel on her home run to London. Her seizure by the agents of the Company of Scotland completed the stalemate whereby it was now no longer possible for the Company vessels of either nation to survive in the territorial waters of the other.

The dispute took on national proportions when Captain Green and a number of his seamen were charged with the murder of the crew of the overdue Scottish Company vessel - the *Speedy Return*. The actions of Captain Hews on *HMS Winchester*, then visiting the Forth, aggravated the prisoners' situation further when he took to searching Scottish vessels, 'firing at them if they refused to comply with his demands'.<sup>74</sup> The trial and conviction of the Captain Green and a few of the officers of the *Worcester* was a travesty of Scottish justice. Not least for the fact that it was known that two crew members of the *Speedy Return* had recently landed at Portsmouth and testified to the true fate of their vessel - taken by Madagascan pirates.<sup>75</sup>

The public executions of Green and two fellow officers on Leith Sands was timed to within a few days of the passing of the English 'Aliens Act' which would have effectively severed Anglo-Scottish trading links by expelling the Scottish merchant

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<sup>73</sup> *Historical Manuscripts Commission, House of Lords Report*, new series, , VI, (1704-6), pp. 233-8, as quoted by Whatley, 'The Union of 1707', p. 156.

<sup>74</sup> SRO, PC 1/53, p. 370, 12 March 1705.

<sup>75</sup> SRO HCAS AC9/126 and 150, Fiscal v Green. Clerk of Penicuik gives a graphic and contemporary report on this case; SRO, MSS GD 18/6072, *Account of the trial of Capt. Thomas Green and crew for piracy*.



community in London. The *Worcester* tragedy did however have the effect of displaying the enormity of Scottish disaffection to their overbearing neighbour and shocked both establishments into seeking a way round the *impasse*. To this end the crown ordered the commissioners from the respective nations to reconvene in London in 1705 to formulate a full political and economic union as a matter of urgency.

### **The final solution to the maritime sovereignty issue - the incorporating union**

The first article of the proposed Treaty of Union, the surrender of national sovereignty to create 'one kingdom', was fully debated the following year by the Scottish Parliament. Towards the end of their deliberations the Scots Commissioner, William Seton of Pitmedden, gave a highly succinct account as to why his signature was on the draft treaty. His pragmatic observation was that Scotland's future co-existence as an independent trading nation with England could never be peacefully resolved as 'two Kingdoms subject to one Sovereign, having different Interests, the nearer these are one to another, the greater the Jealousie and Emulation will be betwixt them.' Neither could an allegiance to a common monarch ever again be taken as a guarantee of fair play or even-handedness as:

Every monarch, having two or more Kingdoms, will be obliged to prefer the Counsel and Interest of the Stronger to that of the weaker, and the greater Disparity of Power and Riches there is betwixt these Kingdoms, the greater Influence, the more powerful Nation will have on the Sovereign.

In his view the 'remedy' to Scotland's dire economic state and hope for prosperity through foreign trade, required at least 'the Assistance of England'. He left his audience in no doubt that *real politick* dictated that, with the onslaught of virulent mercantilism in Europe, 'no money or Things of value can be purchased in the Course of Commerce but where there's force to protect it.' The harsh reality was that an independent Scotland



was 'behind all other Nations of Europe... being Poor and without Force to protect its Commerce... till it partake of the Trade and Protection of some powerful Neighbour Nation.'<sup>76</sup>

To the man on the street the message was the same. As the pro-Unionist Rev. Dr. John Arbuthnot sermonised from Ecclesiastes X at Mercat Cross of Edinburgh, in December 1706, 'better is he that labourth and aboundeth in all things, that he that boasted himself and wanteth bread'. For him the prospect of prosperity and stability under the Union was infinitely more preferable to national bankruptcy and social strife as an independent nation.<sup>77</sup> Given the adverse circumstances that Scotland was bound to face in the future, it is difficult to perceive what feasible alternative there was to an 'incorporating union' with England; for the Scottish maritime community at least.

The resulting Act of Union of 1707 was a competent piece of diplomacy from the maritime view and interest. Each grievance was taken into account and neutralised: Article IV finally conceded Scottish access to the colonial markets of England; Article V re-defined the shipping of both marines as of 'British' sovereignty under the protection of a British navy; Article XV allocated a generous amount (£219,094 pounds sterling) as the 'equivalent' to compensate for the higher taxation that Scotland would bear after the Union. Much of this funding was used to re-imburse the shareholders of the Company of Scotland for the termination of their company.<sup>78</sup> This was a simple but effective solution that left the English monopolies intact while re-financing the Scottish merchant community to engage in the other trading opportunities the Union would accord them.

The significant concession that the Scots gave in return was the surrender of their sovereignty. In maritime matters Article XIX stripped the Scottish Admiralty of

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<sup>76</sup> Abbreviated version of *A speech in Parliament On the First Article of the Treaty of Union 1706* as quoted in appendix I; Whatley, 'Bought and Sold for English gold?', pp. 48-50.

<sup>77</sup> As quoted by H. See and A.A. Cormack, 'Commercial Relations between France and Scotland in 1707', *Scottish Historical Reveiw* (1926), 23, p. 279.

<sup>78</sup> *Act of Parliament, 5 Anne, Cap.11* (1706).



effective power whilst leaving the edifice in place as a concession to national sensitivities; 'yet the Court of Admiralty established in Scotland should be continued, subject, to future regulations and alterations by the parliaments of Great Britain'. The office of Lord High Admiral of Scotland set an additional problem for the Commissioners as the Duke of Richmond successfully championed his claim to have the office recognised as his heritable title.<sup>79</sup> This was conceded as a proprietary right and the commissioners were obliged to buy-out the office in a separate arrangement.

The passing of the Act of Union terminated Scotland's attempts as an independent sovereign state to achieve a breakthrough in the plantation and colonial trades without 'the Assistance of England'. The Darien Scheme and the events surrounding her efforts at defending her own coastline with guard ships proved that the nation was incapable of providing the necessary 'force' to promote and protect her maritime interests. In virtually every count Scotland had been found deficient. She had neither the necessary stock of shipping and masters, nor the political allies, by which to force an entry and sustain a presence in the preserve of others. Even in home waters her attempt to control the importation of basic foodstuffs with the ban on Irish victuals had to be suspended from 1695 onwards as a succession of crop failures headed the list of misfortunes that befell the Scottish economy during the 'hungry nineties'.

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<sup>79</sup> The basis of his claim dates back to the ratification of the separate jurisdiction of the Scottish Admiral in 1609 and 1681.



### CHAPTER III: THE IMPOSITION OF THE ENGLISH MERCANTILIST SYSTEM IN NORTH BRITAIN AFTER 1707

The Act of Union surrendered Scotland's national sovereignty in return for the 'assistance of England' in promoting Scottish maritime interests and trade aspirations. The practical implication of this agreement was the immediate and unconditional acceptance north of the border of the English model of mercantilism and fiscal regime. This central development, along with the impact of war, largely dictated the development of the Scottish marine and seaborne trade during the eighteenth century.

#### **The obstacles to imposing the English model of Customs and Excise on North Britain**

The harmonisation of the Scottish Customs and Excise regimes with their English counterparts was crucial to securing the Act of Union. Queen Anne's instruction (5 June 1706) to her Commissioners negotiating the terms of the Union was explicit on this matter, that 'there be the same Customs and Excise and all other taxes and the same prohibitions, restrictions and regulations of trade throughout the United Kingdom of Britain'.<sup>1</sup> Implementing this directive in the midst of war proved however to be a highly fraught business which had profound implications for both the course and development of the Scottish marine and, indeed, Scottish society.

As far as the government of the day was concerned, the principal obstacles to integration lay with the virtual non-existence of a Scottish Excise Service and the retarded state of the incumbent Scottish Customs Service. Their solution to the first was to draft in (after May 1707) professional English 'gaugers' to introduce the highly

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<sup>1</sup> As quoted by G. Smith, *Something to declare* (London, 1980), p. 34. The Scottish Board of Customs Commissioners was established by PRO Patent Roll, 6 Anne, P6, No.16, (1707).



unpopular English-style excise regime to 'North Britain'.<sup>2</sup> By comparison, the imposition of an English-style customs regime required a series of radical reforms and a major re-structuring of the existing service.

Prior to 1707, the Scottish Customs Service was made up of a collection of independent and profit-driven tax-farmers who held their licences under arrangements that had hardly changed since Tucker's Excise and Customs Commission set up the first national system fifty years earlier. The shortcomings of the tax-farming system can be illustrated by the contract concluded between the Crown Conservator (under the gift of the Great Seal) and the partnership of Mylne of Barton and Charles Murray.<sup>3</sup> This agreement (covering 1681-84) granted them the right to farm Leith, the principal Customs precinct of Scotland, on payment of an annual rent of £23,000. To ensure an adequate revenue, in the face of widespread belligerence, the deputised Collectors resorted to accommodation rather than enforcement. This meant accepting understated or fraudulent cargo declarations. A report to the Scottish Parliament in 1698 declared that it was common practice for the local tidewaiters to dispense with the onboard survey to check the master's 'report book' against the vessel's cargo prior to berthing - the basic deterrent against wrongful declaration or the broaching of cargo.<sup>4</sup> The amount of revenue raised by such lax methods was essentially a private concern as a clause in the Mylne and Murray contract stipulated that, for an additional £3000 per annum, they could have the customs books of the port 'burn[t] to ashes' at the expiry of their tenure. This practice partly explains the piecemeal survival of the early Scottish customs registers and the lack of credible national trade statistics prior to the Union.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> J.F. Mitchell, 'Englishmen in the Scottish Excise Department, 1707-1823', *Scottish Genealogist*, XIII, pp. 16-28.

<sup>3</sup> *RPC*, XI, p. 31. The English tax farmers customs system had been systematically phased out since 1671. The English Customs Service was subsequently upgraded to a professional body under the central direction of the Commissioners of a Board of Customs - answerable to the Treasury - in 1696; Hoon, *The English Customs System*, p. 7.

<sup>4</sup> Smout, *Scottish Trade*, pp. 32-42.

<sup>5</sup> The fire at the ledger office at Leith in 1683 probably saved them this additional fee. The surviving Scottish port books for this period are held by the SRO as the Exchequer [E.]series.



The replacement of the Scottish tax farmers in the major firths by salaried crown officers lagged decades behind England. The 'foreign customs' of Leith was still in private hands in 1702 and the Treasury was obliged to renew the farmers' licences for the remote customs precincts of Orkney and Shetlands for a number of years after 1707.<sup>6</sup> Customs coverage was also incomplete as stretches of the more inaccessible western coastline were left unsupervised, even though the number of Scottish head ports had risen from the original eight after the Restoration. Within the major firths, customs supervision at the previously unfree ports was insufficient to deter large scale evasion. Indeed, prior to the establishment of new customs head ports at Bo'ness and Alloa (c.1710), it had been found necessary to have soldiers stationed on Inchgarvie Island in the middle of the Firth of Forth to deter the passage of Scottish and Dutch vessels seeking to avoid customs at Leith by landing their cargoes on the upper shores.<sup>7</sup>

The old Scottish Customs Service was therefore at odds with the new ethos of uniformed enforcement at the quay-side and accountability to a central authority which was the driving force behind the 1696 re-organisation of the English Customs Service. Each English Collector was thereafter expected to rigorously collect duties as prescribed and to submit quarterly returns on the trade and shipping through his ports to the new central offices charged with the compilation of 'political arithmetic' by the Treasury.

### **The rapid growth of the smuggling and sharp practice at the Scottish ports with the Union**

In the decades of war that followed the Glorious Revolution, smuggling along the coastline and illicit practice and at the quay sides of the Scottish ports dramatically increased. The immediate spur was the quadrupling of English import tariff levels

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<sup>6</sup> The Leith Customs tack syndicate 1697-1702 was headed Sir Archibald Mure. Details of the Shetland tack are available in H.C. Smith, *Shetland Life and Trade 1550-1914* (Edinburgh, 1984), p. 213.

<sup>7</sup> Mowat, *Leith*, p. 205.



between 1690 and 1704, with only a few categories of essential raw materials exempted. As Scottish tariff levels on these commodities had not followed suit, the anomaly encouraged collusion between Scottish and northern English merchants. High-tariffed commodities, especially tobacco and spirits, were landed at a low duty Scottish port on the west coast, to be later slipped into the English and Irish domestic markets. This trade was in direct breach of the English Navigation Acts and in 1701 Charles Godolphin, the most able of the English Commissioners of Customs, was given special leave from his London duties to investigate the growth of this illegal trade with Scotland.<sup>8</sup>

To the outraged London and Bristol merchants such practices gave the Scottish traders and their accomplices a cost advantage in both home and foreign markets. Just before the Union they pointed out that the English Customs grossed annually c.£1,350,000 in duties while the Scottish Customs averaged only c.£30,000 (just over two per cent of the British Custom's revenue).<sup>9</sup> This situation was the subject of a report submitted in 1710 to the new Lord Treasurer, Robert Harley, by the Scottish peer, the Earl of Wemyss, entitled *A Brief Account of the Customs of North Britain*. It stated that before the Union half of the gross receipts from Scotland were from those:

principal Branches of Importation from whence the Customs did arise were first 1,600 Tuns of Wine & Brandy, and 2,000 hhds of Tobacco, the Wine and Brandy was Imported from France, and Holland, some of the Tobacco from England, but most of it was stolen in from the plantations.<sup>10</sup>

When the pronouncement was made in January that the Union of Scotland and England would become effective as from 1 May, there was a rush to land colonial commodities at the Scottish ports. In the four months prior to the Union it was estimated that

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<sup>8</sup> E. Carson, *The Ancient and Rightful Customs* (London, 1972), p.118 and Hoon, *English Customs*, p. 3

<sup>9</sup> J.M. Price, 'Glasgow, the Tobacco Trade and the Scottish Customs, 1707-1730', *Scottish Historical Review*, LXIII (1984), p. 7. Professor Price believes this report was compiled by Thomas Fullarton, an English Customs officer raised to the position of Scottish Commissioner in 1709.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, p. 6.



tobacco imports into Scottish ports rose to 2.13 million pounds, double the usual annual rate. A super-profit was made after the Union when these cargoes, as the legally imported stock of North Britain, were moved into the English domestic market.

The Atlantic-facing Solway and Clyde ports particularly benefited from this short-lived bonanza owing to their easy access to the colonies and their close proximity to England and Ireland. The propagandist for the Union, Daniel Defoe, reported to the readers of his *Reviews* that he was 'told by a merchant in Dumfries, that there have been 4,000 hogsheads brought from England into that Town only.'<sup>11</sup> This figure had, undoubtedly, a large element of journalistic licence as such a store would amount to around two million pounds of tobacco, equivalent to the entire annual Scottish trade in this commodity at this time.<sup>12</sup> While the actual amounts that passed through the port of Dumfries at that time will probably never be known, the impression remains that this speculative boom created an upsurge in shipping activity.

After the speculators' moment had come and gone, the imposition of high import tariffs on most luxury goods guaranteed the accelerating growth of 'the trade', as smuggling was known. The Isle of Man, the fiscal rights to which were the prerogative of its owner (the Duke of Atholl), quickly established itself as the epicentre of the trade on the west coast. In direct response, the newly installed Scottish Commissioners allocated their first revenue sloop to the opposing Galloway coast, at a cost of £160 to build and £10 to provision with small arms.<sup>13</sup>

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11 Ibid.

12 Calculated on the basis that the tobacco prized into the average hogshead was then c.500 lb.

13 G. Smith, *King's Cutters* (London, 1983) p. 34. An analysis of the smuggling on the west coast economy is available in L.M. Cullen, 'Smuggling in the North Channel in the eighteenth century', *Scottish Economic and Social History* (1987), 7. pp. 9-26.



## The re-structuring of the post-Union Scottish Customs Service

The Scottish Boards of Customs and Excise were first authorised to sit at Edinburgh in June 1707. The following month, the Lord Treasurer of Scotland received the Treasury warrant to 'compound and regulate all matters and abuses relating to the seizure of goods, wares and merchandise, imported and exported, into and out of, Scotland'.<sup>14</sup> Whitehall however retained the main instruments of policy making, namely, the registration and regulation of Scottish shipping in the colonial trade. These controls were placed under the supervision of the Board of Trade and Plantations sitting at London. Similarly, the various Inspector Generals responsible for collating trade statistics required the Scottish Board of Customs to forward the precinct quarterly reports on enumerated trade (by quantity and *official* value). This remained the situation until the creation of a Scottish Board of Trade in 1723. Thereafter, quarterly and annual extracts were generated from the Edinburgh-held registers and forwarded to London.<sup>15</sup>

During the intervening period there was widespread allegations of unchecked fraud. Professor Price's study of the evidence of malpractice put before Parliament by the English tobacco lobby described a customs service riddled with incompetent, and probably, corrupt officers.<sup>16</sup> The lobbyists' claims ignored the short-comings of government policy and focused instead on two widespread abuses: collusion between merchants and corrupt officials when weighing goods for duty purposes; and the fraudulent claiming of 'draw-back' of import duty on goods. The latter involved supposedly damaged, ruined or declared for re-export goods which were subsequently

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<sup>14</sup> British Library, Harlean MSS 2263, Warrant dated 22 July 1708 and signed by Godolphin, then Lord Treasurer of England.

<sup>15</sup> This office had been enlarged to cover Scotland by Treasury decree; PRO Treasury Papers, 1, No.94. The majority of eighteenth century Customs annual reports are held by the PRO Customs 17 series.

<sup>16</sup> Price, 'Glasgow, the Tobacco Trade', pp. 1-36.



re-landed illegally onto the domestic market.<sup>17</sup> There was, undoubtedly, substance to these allegations. At the core lay the problem of recruiting reliable officers at the Scottish ports. Unlike the Scottish Excise Service, many of the first cohort of local customs supernumeraries had been previously employed by the old tax farmers. Left to their own devices they invariably reverted back to their old accommodations with the local shippers after their English supervisors had left. As Defoe commented:

in the [Scottish] Customs the clamours against the Englishmen being employed has laid hold of, but the conduct of the commissioners here likewise answered the pretence, no sooner had the officers sent by the commissioners in England ... done the work they came about, viz. in directing and instructing the officers in Scotland, but the greatest part were [went] back again...<sup>18</sup>

### **The 1710 Customs Establishment**

The solution to the recidivism within the service was a series of purges, commencing in 1710 with Godolphin's new establishment which removed most of the original staffing of 1707 and dispensed entirely with supernumeraries. The problem of adequate coverage was also addressed at the same time with the creation of new permanently staffed customs houses at Alloa, Anstruther Easter, Bo'ness, 'Newport' Glasgow and Greenock.

The raising of Bo'ness and Alloa to customs head port closely followed their promotion to free port status. In the years immediately following the Union, the Convention of the Royal Burghs had made a last concerted effort to re-assert their monopoly on the 'right to communicate' in foreign trade over those unfree ports that had

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<sup>17</sup> The scale, range and economic impact of smuggling during this era is examined in R.C. Nash 'The English and Scottish Tobacco Trades in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: Legal and Illegal Trade', *Economic History Review*, second Series (1982), XXXV, pp. 354-372; and T.C. Barker, 'Smuggling in the eighteenth century: the evidence of the Scottish tobacco trade', *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* (1954), LXII, pp. 357-99.

<sup>18</sup> Defoe, *History of the Union*. as quoted by *ibid*, p. 18.



yet to accept a share in the cess tax burden. In 1709 a number of Royal Burghs resorted to arresting at sea vessels of unfree ports found engaging in foreign trade. This form of direct action proved persuasive and the principal offending Barony Burghs - Greenock, Kilmarnock, Saltcoats, Bo'ness, Peterhead and Alloa - finally took up the cess tax option.<sup>19</sup>

In the re-structuring of the Scottish Customs Service the upper Clyde ports received the largest allocation of staff in recognition of their leading part in the post-Union boom in trading coal, herring, sugar and tobacco. The Collector of the new precinct of Port Glasgow, which then included the ports of Greenock and Dumbarton, received the largest budget (£995). This was to maintain a Comptroller and one tide surveyor at each port together with four landwaiters, one of whom was regularly stationed at Greenock. The Collector at the quay-side of the City of Glasgow, eighteen miles up river, was allocated £100 to maintain a Comptroller; one landwaiter; three landcarriagemen (labourers to the landwaiter) and two boatmen. This substantial establishment was justified by the need to supervise the landing and overland transportation of goods destined for re-export through Bo'ness and Alloa.<sup>20</sup>

Even with Godolphin's ninety new permanent appointments, Scotland still remained one of the weakest links in the customs service of mainland Britain. In 1711, during the war with France, the Board of Commissioners found it necessary to send a circular to all English customs officers to be ever vigilant against false declarations made on French wine and brandy routed through Scottish ports and then sent coastwise as 'produce of Portugal'.<sup>21</sup> In 1716 the Board wrote to its Scottish Collectors chastising them that 'the duties of the tobacco since the Union...fall vastly short of what the

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<sup>19</sup> It is an indication of their commercial success that their contribution to the cess tax was substantially raised in 1719. Payment was a different matter as, by 1723, the collecting agent reported to the Convention that the Barony Burghs had only paid £15,509 (Scots) leaving £11,834 in outstanding.

<sup>20</sup> Price, 'Glasgow, the Tobacco Trade', footnote p.10.

<sup>21</sup> The letterbooks of Scotland's largest wine importer of the period (Oliphant & Co., of Ayr) indicate that the importing of preferred claret under the guise of 'Portuguese' was commonplace in the eighteenth century; J. Fergusson, 'A wine merchant's letter book' in Pares, R. and Taylor, A.J.P., (eds.), *Essays Presented to Sir Lewis Namier*, reprinted in *Ayrshire Collections*, (Ayrshire Archaeological and Natural History Society), IV, pp. 216-224.



consumption of Scotland ought to pay'.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, one modern study of Scotland's role in the early tobacco trade has deduced that during the period 1715-17 the amount smuggled was around sixty-two per cent of that legally imported.<sup>23</sup> Such was the growth of the tobacco re-export trade that, in 1718, an additional post of 'Inspector General of Tobacco in Scotland' was created by the Treasury and awarded to David Graham, the Collector at Port Glasgow.

### **The replacement of customs cruisers with King's boats in the North**

This new appointment did little to stem the influx of smuggled goods which was exacerbated by a major error of judgement made during Godolphin's 1710 review of the service. That was the decision to dispense with the five customs sloops then stationed at Leith, Montrose, Aberdeen, Inverness and Dumfries. These sea-going vessels, usually described as wherries, had been found by the local officers to be ideal when visiting local creeks, off-shore cruising or staying on station in bad weather. Their superiors were of a different opinion. They maintained that they were expensive in upkeep (£1,400 per annum) and unsuitable for 'the deep coasts, islands, firths and tides of Scotland'. Consequently they were sold out of service and replaced by fourteen open-oared 'King's Boats' which were stationed around the coast from Dunbar to Dumfries, including Stornoway, Lerwick and New Port Glasgow.<sup>24</sup>

King's boats came in two sizes, 'small' and 'bigge'. The former rarely left the immediate vicinity of the harbour roadstead while the latter were able to put to sea and raise a sail in the right conditions. Neither possessed the sea-worthiness necessary to keep on station in adverse weather to deter the illegal trans-shipment of goods from

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<sup>22</sup> This statement was referring to loss of duty on domestically consumed tobacco owing to the market being glutted by illegally landed supplies.

<sup>23</sup> Nash, 'The English and Scottish Tobacco Trades', p.364. A more comprehensive view of the Scottish tobacco trade is T.M. Devine, *The Tobacco Lords* (Edinburgh, 1975).

<sup>24</sup> Smith, *Kings Cutters*, p.34



merchantmen entering the lower firths. Furthermore, the boat crews were only supplied with side arms - a wholly ineffective defence against the swivel cannons of the well-armed smuggler 'bucker'. As a direct consequence, the first phase of the war against the smuggler was primarily fought, unsuccessfully, at the place of landing. In 1716 the mistake was eventually conceded by the Treasury and a suitably armed cruising yacht - *Royal George* (80 tons), Captain Lane Whitehall - was allocated to the busy Firth of Forth to intercept the incoming smuggler at sea.<sup>25</sup>

### **The demoralisation of the Scottish Customs Service**

At the root of the smuggling problem was the widespread resentment of the higher degree of state interference under Hanoverian rule and bitter reaction to the fiscal *diktat* of London - the latter introducing the modern concept of relatively high and universal taxation.

Set against this background of anti-establishmentism, the Collectors' correspondence with their superiors in Edinburgh paint a bleak picture of a highly frustrated and, at the outlying stations, intimidated Service. Their attempts at enforcing order, without the support of a militia, were often denigrated by their superiors and systematically thwarted by organised gangs prepared to resort to violence. The apparent ease with which the smuggling 'companies' conducted their business was maintained by the wall of silence put up by the local inhabitants and their willingness to turn out to obstruct the enforcement of the law. Indeed, it is rare to find an account in the customs correspondences of the period where a smuggler was successfully brought to trial after a serious incident. In almost every instance the accused fled the scene of the crime with

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<sup>25</sup> The Scottish Customs Board had previously petitioned the Treasury to have a small frigate of 24-30 guns stationed in the Firth of Forth (1712); PRO Treasury 1/146/13. Whitehall was inept as he allowed the crew of an arrested Elie smuggler to stay aboard overnight whereupon they broke open the sealed hatches and sold fifty casks of brandy over the side; SRO HCAS AC 9/723.



the help of a mob, usually with women to the fore, or escaped custody due to the negligence of the jailer.

There were also allegations of corruption made against individual customs officers by the business associates of the smuggling fraternity.<sup>26</sup> These ranged from collusion with local smugglers, a charge laid against the Collector of Inverness and Aberdeen; to the case in which the tide surveyor at the latter port was accused of openly using the King's Boat for his own smuggling runs.<sup>27</sup>

This blend of intimidation and collusion impregnated the social fabric of the Scottish coastal communities and was a cause of great concern for the policy makers in London and the governing 'beleagued native oligarchy' in Edinburgh during and after the failed Jacobite Rebellions.<sup>28</sup> Following the death of Queen Anne (1 August 1714) the question of the loyalty of individual officers to the Hanoverian Succession reached a level of collective neurosis. The failure of the Fifteen Rebellion turned this obsession into something approaching an inquisition which broke the careers of a number of local customs officers. Dismissal often followed an accusation of harbouring Jacobite sympathies while overt loyalty was rewarded. In the latter category one Scottish officer received an *ex-gratia* payment of £50 having been 'barbarously assaulted and maimed for expressing his affection for the Government of the times, on the occasion of the King's coronation'.<sup>29</sup>

Such events were well quoted during the English tobacco merchants' parliamentary lobbying which reached a climax with a petition to the House of Commons during the winter session of 1721-2. Robert Walpole, newly appointed First Lord of the Treasury, skilfully deflected their demands to exclude tobacco from the

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26 Extracts from the Scottish Customs letterbooks pertaining to smuggling as compiled by F. Wilkins: *Strathclyde's Smuggling Story* (1992); *Dumfries and Galloway's Smuggling Story* (1993); *The Smuggling Story of the Two Firths* [Forth and Tay] (1993); and *The Smuggling Story of the Northern Shore* (1995) (Wyre Forest Press).

27 Smith, *Kings Cutters*, p.34.

28 D. Szechi, 'The Hanoverians and Scotland, in M. Greengrass (ed.), *Conquest and Coalscence* (London, 1991), p. 123.

29 Smith, *Something to declare*, p.55.



terms of the Union or to scrap the Union itself. His tactic was to allay their basic grievances with placatory measures so as not to lose their support for his impending budget. This budget completed the fiscal restructuring, started back in 1696, by dismantling the remaining tariffs on exports (with the exception of wool).

### **The inspections of the Scottish Customs Service 1722-3**

In April 1722, the Treasury was seen to act on the allegations of widespread evasion of duty at the Scottish ports. Four acting 'surveyor generals' were created and filled by political appointees under the leadership of a Scottish Customs Commissioner, the Englishman Humphrey Brent. Without professional serving officers on this investigating team, it devolved to a paper exercise. Brent concentrated most of his efforts on examining the Edinburgh-held Scottish Customs registers, the bulk of which had been compiled under the direction of the first Scottish Comptroller-General (John Crookshank) who had been recently dismissed for incompetence (1719).<sup>30</sup>

In the summer of 1723 however a more business-like team of three senior and experienced English Customs officers lead by Robert Paul, the 'assistant-comptroller-general', undertook a field inspection of the major Scottish ports, starting with Port Glasgow. After their tour, eight reports were submitted between June and October of the following year. One of their recommendations was acted upon immediately - the need to restore sea-going revenue cruisers in all the major firths. Their previous replacement with oared open 'King's boats' had seriously curtailed the local officers' ability to regulate the traffic passing along their stretch of the coast. As the Collector of Dundee reported to his superiors, in June 1725, his 'bigge' boat had been 'beat to pieces by a storm' while his small boat was 'insufficient for the business' as it 'cannot stand on station' and so allowed vessels to past unchallenged.

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30 Price, 'Glasgow, the Tobacco Trade' p.20.



In the face of such evidence, the Treasury duly sanctioned the acquisition of seven new sloops from English yards and ordered the old *Royal George* to be sold out of the Service. The first of these - *Princess Caroline* - was stationed at Montrose some time around 1725. The other new vessels deployed were also named, in keeping with the political correctness of the day, after the Hanoverian royal family - *Prince(s) William* and *Frederick* and the *Princess(es) Amelia, Anne, Louisa* and *Mary*.<sup>31</sup>

The other victory scored by the English merchants' parliamentary campaign was the political fob of disbanding the Scottish Customs Board in favour of a British Board sitting in London. By the following year (1726) this 'unified' board was operational having amalgamated the seven commissioners sitting at London with the five that had previously sat independently at Edinburgh. These Scottish Commissioners were then deputed to return to Edinburgh with new powers to issue 'plantation certificates' which had previously been the sole prerogative of the London-based Board of Trade and Plantations.

### **Walpole's failure to install a bonded warehouse system**

Matters however do not seem to have greatly improved with the re-organisation. In 1725 the zealous Collector of Customs at Liverpool wrote to his superiors; 'I have lately discovered and detected a most notorious fraud...scarce to be equalled in North Britain ...and I am told some of our merchants carry on the same fraudulent trade in Glasgow'.<sup>32</sup> The particular abuse he had uncovered was a new variation on the drawback swindle whereby bundles of unwanted low duty tobacco stalks were wrapped in

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<sup>31</sup> Smith, *King's Cutters*, pp. 34-5 This use of royal names for new vessels entering the Scottish Customs service was upheld whilst a Hanoverian monarch remained on the British throne. The exception being the *Cumbra[y]es* wherry stationed at Millport on the Firth of Clyde which, presumably, pre-dated the new order or, being a wherry, not considered appropriate for a royal name. These customs cruisers were frequently co-opted to support military service in times of war or crisis or to aid the Scottish Excise Service (which did not have its own cruisers until 1763).

<sup>32</sup> In 1729, he listed of all the vessels leaving his port which he suspected were intent on re-landing their tobacco in Ireland or Scotland. Both the Irish and Scottish Customs Services declined to act on his information; J. Paxton and J. Wroughton, *Smuggling*(London, 1971), p. 24.



leaf and re-exported as solid 'parcels' of spun leaf on which the higher duty was reclaimed.

The continuing stream of allegations of malpractice in the North instigated a new campaign by English tobacco merchants in the early 1730's. Their aim was to remove Scottish ports from the list of those permitted to receive enumerated goods.<sup>33</sup> Their lobbying resulted in the setting up of a Committee of Investigation (1732) which confirmed the existence of widespread and large scale abuse. This evidence was used, in turn, by Robert Walpole to justify the element in his Excise Scheme of 1733 that sought to impose a bonded warehouse system on the re-export tobacco trade. This measure had been actively considered back in 1713. Unfortunately, the hysteria generated throughout the country by the main tax proposal, a higher malt duty, forced a withdrawal of the bill thereby effectively killing off the warehouse scheme.

Although there was no rioting in the North on the scale of the previous malt tax (1725), it did re-fuel anti-government sentiment in Scotland as a whole. The smuggling fraternities were quick to harness this ground-swell of hostility and Jacobitism to alienate the local agents of government within the coastal communities.<sup>34</sup> In 1733 reports of violence and intimidation streamed from the Collectors at the head ports. The correspondence of the Collector at Inverness, writing in May of that year, serves to illustrate the degree of organised hostility he was facing daily:

Yesterday morning some ill-disposed villains have carried away the Customs boat across the ferry, and with saws and axes have cut her in two by the middle, left the one half on the beach, and disposed of the other to the waves. The execution of this is owing no doubt to the common people, but the contrivance to greater heads, and that it has been premeditated appears by the tools they had provided themselves with to perform it. 'Tis hard to tell where this will end.

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<sup>33</sup> Enumerated goods were those listed under the terms of the Navigation Acts and liable for 'draw-back' of import duty if re-exported.

<sup>34</sup> As Szechi rightly concludes 'patriotic anti-Unionism in Scotland had nowhere else to go but Jacobitism after 1707'; Szechi, 'The Hanoverians and Scotland', p. 126.



The warehouse has been twice broken open, the boat destroyed, the expresses from the outports stopped and the letters taken away, a person under suspicion of being an informer dragged across the Firth and his ears cut out, and hints every day given to myself to take care of my life, in short no part of the face of the earth is peopled by such abandoned villains as this country.<sup>35</sup>

The perceived impotency of the local customs officers to deal with this level of civil disobedience led to the promise of yet another inquiry into the competence of the Scottish Customs Service.<sup>36</sup>

The remoteness of London's overall control of the Scottish Customs Service did little to help matters. The facade of a unified Customs Board was maintained until the departure of Walpole from office in 1742, after which a separate Scottish Customs Board was quietly reconstituted at Edinburgh. By then the responsibilities of the service had grown in line with the seemingly ever-increasing list of goods on which duty was payable, including locally produced salt.

### **The impact of the protectionist fiscal regime on Scottish trading aspirations**

This re-structuring of national fiscal policies to create a protectionist barrier had profound consequences for the post-1707 Scottish economy, dogged as it was by recurring financial crises and a lengthy depression. The imposition of a high tariff regime destroyed the hopes of the Scottish Royal Burghs to revive their traditional trade with France after the wars. In the interim there appeared to be few legitimate alternatives to absorb Scottish trading aspirations. As the contemporary commentator 'Bass John' Spruell pointed out, Scotland had entered the new century lacking any

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35 SRO CE 62/1/1 Collector of Inverness to Board, 18 May 1733.

36 A graphic account of the 'reign of terror' at Montrose is available in D. Fraser, *The Smugglers* (Montrose, 1971).



manufacturing base of consequence from which to promote exchange to the plantations and colonies.

The recovery of Scotland's overseas trade in the 1730s owed more to illicit trading and sharp practice in the re-export trade of relatively high value commodities than to the rise in legal trade. By the 1750's the black economy nurtured by Walpole's budgets, was firmly rooted at every Scottish port. The corrupting influence of the trade, touched every level of Scottish society.<sup>37</sup> Not every Scottish Customs Commissioner however out rightly condemned the smuggler as a canker in society. Adam Smith, in his later role as a political economist, chose instead to denounce that great folly of successive governments - the mercantilist system - as the real culprit. In doing so he collectively absolved the smuggler as an entrepreneur who 'would have been in every respect an excellent citizen had not the laws of his country made that a crime that nature never meant to be so.'<sup>38</sup>

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37 The network of west coast 'friends' and customser of the smuggling baron George Moore alone numbered in excess of 300 individuals; F. Wilkins, *George Moore and Friends; Letters from a Manx merchant 1750-1760*, (Wyre Forest Press, 1994), appendix II, pp. 287-292.

38 As quoted by Smith, *Something to Declare*, p. 93. His family were professional customs officers who held senior positions within the new establishments at Alloa and Kirkcaldy.



## CHAPTER IV: THE IMPACT OF THE UNION ON THE FLEETS OF SCOTLAND

Measuring the immediate impact of the Union by listing the vessels owned by the Scottish ports was one of a number of onerous tasks given to Robert Paul's team of officers as part of their inspection of the Scottish Customs Service (1724-5). The ownership of vessels served as a prime non-monetary indicator of regional and national prosperity throughout the eighteenth century as hulls were readily bought and sold in direct response to changes in business confidence. Changes in the numbers, tonnage and distribution of vessels therefore offered the administrators of the day tangible evidence of the impact of new legislation, trade cycles and war. This fairly sensitive barometer goes some way to compensate for the acknowledged limitations of contemporary methods of measuring in *official* values the bi-lateral foreign-going trade during an era noted for endemic smuggling.<sup>1</sup>

### The terms of Paul's 1725 Review of the Scottish marine

Paul fulfilled his mission by examining the 'Accompts sent from North Britain' held by the 'Register-General of Trading Ships' at London.<sup>2</sup> This prime source was probably as valid and complete as any available for the period as, under the terms of the Act of Union, all Scottish vessels were required to register as part of the British marine - under pain of confiscation.<sup>3</sup> The survey's declared objective was therefore to compile;

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<sup>1</sup> Appendix B discusses the credibility of this survey.

<sup>2</sup> This position had been created in 1701 and upgraded to a full office - answerable to Godolphin - in 1707. His hand-written survey is dated 24 March 1725 (1724 O.S.); British Library, Harlean MSS 6269. The dual dating system (e.g. 1724/25) was used by Customs until 1752 to cover the disparity between the Scottish New Year (1 January since 1600) and the Church of England New Year (Lady Day - 25 March).

<sup>3</sup> The increase in tonnage owned since the Royal Burgh's 1692 Register may be partly owing to the introduction the '1694 formula' for measuring the tonnage of a vessel in the North, see; Appendix A..



An alphabeticall list of all ships and vessells with their respective Tonnage that appear by the generall register kept at London to have traded in any Ports of North Britain from Christmas 1707 to Christmas 1712 distinguishing such of them as have been registered pursuant to the Act of Union by the letter 'R'.

Fortunately, the author clarified the rather ambiguous last statement in his title. In a postscript he defined those vessels 'Marked in this list with the letter 'R' as appearing to be registered at the time of the Union'; i.e., registered by the end of December 1707. This choice of starting date was deliberate as it allowed for a period of grace, granted by the Royal Proclamation of 28 July, in which returning long-haul Scottish vessels could register as British.<sup>4</sup> The survey was addressed to Robert Harley, the Lord Chancellor, which indicates that this data was of considerable importance to the establishment of the day.<sup>5</sup>

### **The Scottish fleet of registered vessels of 1707 compared with that accumulated by 1712**

The survey offers an exhaustive and unique view of the Scottish marine during a dynamic stage of its development in terms of growth in numbers and tonnage. Furthermore, by listing them by their location, the composition and distribution of the fleet can be discerned along with - when matched with other contemporary sources - the trading patterns of the different regions and tonnage categories of vessels.

The 'R' vessels (registered by December 1707) provided the inspectors with their benchmark against which the growth of the Scottish fleet was measured over the next five years. These vessels numbered 215 (14,485 tons) giving an average of sixty-seven

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<sup>4</sup> Published in the *London Gazette*, 11 August 1707. An example of the penalties incurred by losing the status of 'free British bottom' was the case of the *Anne* of St. Andrew which was declared 'unfree' by the Scottish Commissioners of Customs (1723). This error cost the master his bounty payment on grain to Norway; SRO HCAS, AC 9/815, Seton v Binning.

<sup>5</sup> This need to quantify the immediate economic benefits of the political Union re-surfaces later in the century.



registered tons per vessel for the Scottish marine. The range of tonnage of vessels was between six and 600 tons, though only three vessels exceeded 200 tons - the *Lyon* and *Viceroy* (both 600 tons) of Leith and the *James* of Montrose (350 tons).<sup>6</sup> Of the outstanding general stock just over half (53%) was less than fifty tons and eighty per cent (83%) were less than 100 tons. By group frequency the smaller hulls in the eleven to seventy tons class stand out as the dominant element in the 1707 Scottish marine. In terms of the geographic distribution, the Firth of Forth ports dominated with just over two-thirds (68%) of the total tonnage, a percentage that rises to over three-quarters (77%) when joined with that of the north-east ports. The Firth of Clyde, then only just emerging as a major shipping area, supported less than a tenth (9.6%) of Scottish owned tonnage.<sup>7</sup>

When the comparison is made between the 'R' hull stock of 1707 and that accumulated over the next five years (up to December 1712), the full impact of the Union becomes apparent. The tonnage of the Scottish ports had increased three and a half times (50,232 tons) while vessel numbers had risen even faster, increasing five fold (1,123 hulls). These figures do not however represent the fleet as it existed in 1712 because the sale of hulls abroad and losses at sea would have reduced their numbers over the intervening five years. Cross-referencing with the available shipping intelligence reports in the contemporary newspapers suggests that this attrition rate might be in the region of ten to fifteen per cent.<sup>8</sup> Even if this adjustment was to be made, the Scottish marine of 1712 was of a size and number that could readily sustain a

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<sup>6</sup> These vessels were possibly trading from London; Smout, *Scottish Trade*, p. 52.

<sup>7</sup> This increase may have been partly owing to more owners of small hulls deciding to register their vessels in the prospect of a 'foreign-going' passage - to Ireland or Norway - rather than new acquisitions.

<sup>8</sup> This impression was deduced from the number of vessels mentioned in contemporary newspapers as trading in the earlier years in Scottish waters but do not re-appear in the later reports. The newspapers consulted are: the *Edinburgh Gazette* (1699-1708); *Edinburgh Courant* (1705-9); *Edinburgh Flying Post* (1709-11); *Scots Courant* (1710-16); *Scots Post Boy* (1711-12). The four out of five of the vessels, along with their port of origin, listed in the *shipping intelligence* reports (from a sample of c.200 entries over the period 1707-1712) have a namesake in the 1725 Review. It is not possible to match one source with the other with absolute certainty as the 1725 Review gives the vessel's name, port and tonnage but not the master - while the newspapers usually give name and port but rarely the master and tonnage.



presence in all of the maritime activities - 'foreign', 'coastal' and the 'fisheries'. Here at last, it would seem, was the critical mass of shipping that had hitherto eluded the efforts of the Scottish Council of Trade since the 1680s.

The composition of the registered fleets had also under-gone significant change since 1707. A much greater proportion was now in the smaller tonnage classes. The lower tonnage classes (less than 50 tons) by 1712 made up just under three-quarters (73%) of the total tonnage while vessels under one hundred tons constituted the vast majority (92%) of the marine. The greatest increase (an additional 178 vessels) was in the smallest size category of open boats (5-10 tons) engaged in ferrying, inshore fishing and conveying coal and salt in the Firths. This is in contrast to a gain of only five vessels for the larger (190+ tons) ocean-going class of vessel.<sup>9</sup>

### **The 1725 Review as a basis for tracing changes in seaborne trading patterns**

This change in the composition of the fleets reflects the shift in the pattern of trading as revealed by the surviving port books of Dundee and in general contemporary commentaries. The dislocation and upheaval in Scottish foreign-going trade before and after 1707, had been counter-balanced by a general expansion of the coastal trade in coal, salt and meal.<sup>10</sup> These commodities enjoyed tax exemptions and concessions for a limited period under the articles of the Act of Union.<sup>11</sup>

When the vessels of the 1725 Review are matched to the trading destinations listed in the *Scots Courant* for 1711, the smaller hulls (up to fifty tons) are found to have

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<sup>9</sup> Customs used the term 'boat' to mean an undecked vessel. Those under five tons - not capable of open sea voyages in normal circumstances - were not included in the port books or Customs shipping registers.

<sup>10</sup> This conclusion is consistent with that expressed by other learned opinion, namely: Whatley 'Union of 1707', pp. 170-2); notes by Smout on his research of Trinity House of Leith Fraternity records; the Danish Sound Tolls; Aberdeen Shore dues; and S. J. Monaghan 'The Dundee Shipping lists as a Record of the Impact of the Union upon the Dundee Shipping Industry 1705-10', unpublished MA dissertation, University of Dundee, 1988. I have to thank Iain Flett for access to the original registers held by Dundee District Archive and Record Centre.

<sup>11</sup> After 1707 King William's bounty on the export of 'corn' was extended to Scotland; 5/- per quarter of wheat, 3/6d on rye and 2/6 on malt. At the same time imports were prohibited until wheat reached 48/- per quarter, rye 32/- and malt 24/-.



been deployed mainly as coastal traders.<sup>12</sup> This class of hull ran the whole of the east coast, venturing as far as Lerwick and London. On the west coast the most cited destinations outside the Clyde were the northern English ports, Ireland and the Isle of Man.

Vessels of the fifty to eighty tons class regularly undertook lengthy off-shore passages and were sent as far afield as Portugal, Spain, the Canaries and the Baltic - often on a triangular or round-about trading route. Above eighty tons was the small number of transatlantic traders from the west coast. The smallest reported was the *Anne* galley of Glasgow (85 tons) which set out from the Port Glasgow for Barbados, in November 1711, having first delivered tobacco and coal to Dublin.<sup>13</sup> The fact that there was only a handful of hulls above one hundred tons underlines contemporary comments that the first sustained upsurge in the Atlantic trades from the west coast ports was served by a mixture of chartered English and Irish vessels and a few select acquisitions to the Clyde fleet. Even so, by December 1712, the Clyde ports' share of the nation's total tonnage had doubled to twenty per cent.

### **The westward shift in the distribution of the Scottish marine**

This westward shift in the distribution of the Scottish marine since the Union is plainly evident in the new ranking order of individual ports by 1712.<sup>14</sup> While the Forth precincts, Leith and Bo'ness retained the top two positions by accumulated tonnage, by a very large margin, the Clyde precincts were closing the gap. Port Glasgow now supported the fourth largest tonnage (previously ranked seventh) closely behind Kirkcaldy (previously third) and just ahead of Aberdeen (previously fifth). The Irvine

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<sup>12</sup> The *Scots Courant* for that year reported c.185 shipping movements. Most reports name the vessel, home port, captain, cargo and destination. They very occasionally mention tonnage, crew size or armaments.

<sup>13</sup> PRO HCA 26/15, letters 17 October 1711, voyage reported by the *Scots Courant*, 24 November 1711.

<sup>14</sup> Appendix C. Table: 4.1 illustrates the distribution of the Scottish marine between the thirty-two precincts of the full eighteenth century Scottish Customs establishment.



precinct, which included Saltcoats, had risen to eighth position (previously seventeenth) while the newly-built harbour at Greenock (1710), supporting only half the tonnage of Port Glasgow, held twelfth place ahead of Inverness. Conspicuous in their failure to consolidate their pre-Union position in the tobacco-carrying trade were the Solway ports with only twenty-seven small vessels (415 tons).

### **The role of the lesser ports**

A unique feature of the 1725 Review is that it catalogued the vessels by their home anchorage rather than under the collective identity of the head port, as was the practice with all later official shipping returns. This allows for an understanding of the contribution of many of the lesser havens to the regional development of shipping during this period. Some, notably those engaged in the coal trade, were ports in their own right and supported a substantial number of vessels. By December 1712 ninety Scottish ports and creeks, from Annan to Eyemouth, were accredited with supporting a registered vessel. In total the lesser ports and creeks supported half the number of Scottish registered hulls (one third by tonnage).<sup>15</sup>

The proliferation of creeks was greatest along the Forth, notably the coal and ferry ports on the opposing shores of the upper Forth which came under the Customs precinct of Bo'ness. This precinct encompassed the havens and anchorages of Burntisland, Queensferry, Grangepans, Limekilns, Torrie, Blackness, Culross, Inverkeithing and North, South, and East Ferry. Their contribution to the overall customs precinct tally (c.6,913 tons) was two-thirds by number and half by tonnage over the five year period since 1707. When their contribution is removed to isolate the home fleet of the head port of Bo'ness, the first clear view of this major anchorage (at c.3,800

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<sup>15</sup> Appendix C. Table: 4.2 outlines the distribution by vessels between headports and creeks by 1712.



tons) becomes available.<sup>16</sup> This port had already eclipsed the declining Kirkcaldy (c.2,778 tons) and was on a par with the emerging Port Glasgow (c.3,461 tons).

A similar situation applies to the head port of Irvine on the lower Clyde where half the declared tonnage of the precinct belonged to the neighbouring and newly completed (1700) coal port of Saltcoats.<sup>17</sup> The contribution of the creeks in supplying the smaller craft to the precinct's fleets can distort the average tonnage figure for the head port by as much as thirty per cent.<sup>18</sup> Bo'ness was, again, the most impressive example as it had the highest average tonnage of any head port in Scotland. The statistics for the few head ports that do not follow this general pattern (Caithness, Campbeltown, Dunbar and Stranraer) are distorted by the presence of a solitary large hull at one of their creeks.

A stock of these larger hulls, characteristically three or four times greater than the average tonnage registered for their home port, can be extracted from the 1725 Review<sup>19</sup> Many of these vessels carried the main trading aspirations of their community in foreign-going ventures with the surplus local output.<sup>20</sup> It would appear that many of the lesser east coast ports also supported one or two hulls that were too large to operate a regular trade from their home port and would have required a spring tide to enter and leave fully loaded.<sup>21</sup> Their heavy involvement in 'round-about' overseas trading is suggested by their conspicuous absence, especially during the war years, for lengthy periods from the shipping intelligence reports of shipping movements

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<sup>16</sup> Bo'ness received the head port of the precinct in preference to Blackness during the re-organisation of the 1710 Establishment.

<sup>17</sup> Saltcoats never attained or requested its own precinct though a salt officer was eventually appointed to the port in the mid-1750s.

<sup>18</sup> Appendix C. Table: 4.3.

<sup>19</sup> Appendix C. Table: 4.4.

<sup>20</sup> In the case of Caithness it was the *Three Brothers* of Tain (150 tons); at Campbeltown it was an un-named 'frigot' (50 tons) of 'New' Tarbert; at Dunbar it was the *Sophie and Margaret* of Eyemouth (60 tons); while at Stranraer precinct it was the *Margaret* of Ballantrae (30 tons).

<sup>21</sup> The commentator for Kirkcaldy to the *Statistical Account* (1791) lamented of the previous dispersal of his port's home fleet to serve the great ports, 'some of the largest of them are employed in the trade to the Mediterranean, the West Indies and America, and of these some have been occasionally absent from this place for three or four years'.



in Scottish home waters. This was not the case with the larger vessels of the Clyde which were regularly reported as returning with colonial commodities to their deep water home ports of Greenock and Port Glasgow.

### **The Atlantic traders 1707-13**

The number of transatlantic passages made from the Scottish ports in the years 1707-12 is, given the subsequent loss of many of the port books for this period, a matter for conjecture. The 'shipping intelligence' in the *Scots Courant* for 1711 does however allow for a snap shot of wartime trading activity that conveys a sense of scale and frequency of passages to foreign-going passages from the Scottish ports at this time. In that year (noted only for a few minor security scares in Scottish waters) fourteen passages were reported to America and nine to the West Indies from the Scottish ports.

The number of Scottish-owned vessels directly involved in the American trades in that year numbered eight. This was the same number that Defoe reckoned were fitted out in Scotland for the English plantations in the first year after the Union.<sup>22</sup> Therefore the fifteen Scottish vessels that took out letters of marque during the 1707-13 period (eleven vessels were from the east coast ports and the remaining four from Port Glasgow) must represent the cream of the Scottish armed traders running the Atlantic and the north-south trade of Europe.<sup>23</sup>

The available details of transatlantic voyages at this time are of interest as they display the Glasgow tobacco merchants dependency on chartered hulls. Of the six tobacco ships reported entering the Firth of Clyde in 1711 only two were returning to their home port; the remaining four were from Whitehaven and Workington.<sup>24</sup> By way

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<sup>22</sup> Defoe, *History of the Union*, p. 415; as quoted by Smout, *Scottish Trade*, p.177.

<sup>23</sup> PRO HCA 26/13. None exceed 200 tons, the smallest at thirty-five tons was the Clyde to Belfast armed packet *Dolphin* of Port Glasgow.

<sup>24</sup> The *Hope* (70 tons) and the *American Merchant* (160 tons), both of Port Glasgow; *Scots Courant*, 26 February and 21 April 1711.



of contrast the east coast sent out four, all locally-owned vessels, to Virginia that year.<sup>25</sup> The same reports noted the growing new trade in rice, oil and resin from the Carolinas with three Clyde vessels arrived home with these commodities that summer.<sup>26</sup> Completing the tally were two Boston-owned vessels that made the crossing to Scotland but probably only touched at a Scottish port to conform with the Navigation Acts before sailing on to their southern European market.<sup>27</sup>

More fully reported in the *Scots Courant* during 1711 were the passages of the three armed West Indiamen from the Clyde. The most interesting was the *Betty* of Bo'ness [ex-*Elizabeth*] (100 tons) as she serves as an example of the transfer of vessels from the east to the west coast. This well-armed vessel was brought round from the Forth by her captain, John Finlayson, and in March 1711 and sailed from the Clyde in convoy under the protection of *HMS Queensborough* as far as Dublin. Her cargo was barrelled herring and baled goods for Antigua and she was described as 'of Port Glasgow' thereafter. By November of that year she was safely back at her home port after made a seven week passage from Antigua carrying sugar and cotton.<sup>28</sup> Two other Port Glasgow vessels also returned with West Indian sugar for refining at the three Glasgow sugar houses that had been established by 1700.<sup>29</sup> Any additional demand they had for unrefined brown sugar was met by imported stock shipped from Bristol.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> The *Friendship* (130 tons) of Leith; the *Concord* (150 tons) of Queensferry; the *Johanna* (130 tons); and the *Antelop* (details unknown) of Aberdeen; *ibid*, 16 August, 13 April and 26 May 1711.

<sup>26</sup> The *Margaret* (details unknown); the *Expedition* galley of Port Glasgow (100 tons/ 6 guns); and the *Endeavour* of Irvine (100 tons); *ibid*, 1 August, 23 June and 4 December 1711.

<sup>27</sup> The *Dolphin* and *Speedwell* Galley of Boston reported at Inverness; *ibid*, 26 May 1711.

<sup>28</sup> PRO HCA 26/15 letters 21 February 1711, outward bound; *Scots Courant*, 15 March 1711. Reported at Glasgow from Antigua with sugar after seven week passage; *ibid*, 5 and 12 November 1711. In her two voyages from Greenock - one to Sweden, the other to Antigua - she made a cumulative loss of £5,092. The vessel was eventually arrested and roused (1714) in lieu of debts outstanding against the master. Thirty-six 'firelocks' were part of the inventory; SRO HCAS AC 8/139, 168 and 9/511.

<sup>29</sup> The *Resolution* galley of Glasgow (150 tons) and the *Elizabeth* of Glasgow (160 tons). Their respective voyages to Jamaica and Barbados; *Scots Courant*, 30 May and 12 September 1711.

<sup>30</sup> Delivery of sugar to the 'westerie sugar house' from Bristol by the *Speedwell* of Liverpool; *Edinburgh Courant*, 9 May 1710. *Two Brothers* of Greenock, Captain James Boyd, in from Bristol with sugar and cider; *Scots Courant*, 2 April 1711.



## The Scottish north-south European traders 1707-12

The principal marines engaged in the north-south European trade were locked in armed struggle at this time. Sailing south into the war zones of the 'Straits' and the Western Mediterranean was therefore a high risk venture. The *Dee* galley of Aberdeen (150 tons), which set out for Livorno in late 1710, was well prepared for damage to the extent of carrying three sets of sails and spare cordage.<sup>31</sup> On the west coast the *Glasgow* galley (190 tons) carried a crew of fifty man and a list of supplies indicative of a vessel determined to defend herself on her voyage to Lisbon via Sligo.<sup>32</sup> On the safer off-shore passage to Maderia most of the Scottish traders reported in the shipping intelligence were under 70 tons and only lightly armed.

Armed trading offered the chance to engage in grand theft (prize-taking) when the opportunity availed itself. A case in question was the letter of marque *Gordon* 'galley' of Leith (80 tons) owned by Captain Thomas Gordon R.N. She voyaged as far afield as Archangel, Bergen, Riga and Cadiz during the war years. On one occasion her master, Pershaw, grasped the opportunity to board and seize two French-owned vessels - the *Enfro* and the *Mademoiselle* 'of Stockholm' - that claimed to be neutrals. The former was 'of so great a burthen that she cannot come into [Leith] harbour until the springs'.<sup>33</sup>

The largest number of Scottish vessels were engaged in trading to the Low Countries, Baltic and Scandinavia. Most sailed unarmed and without letters of marque as the Anglo-Dutch North Sea convoy system offered adequate protection. During 1711 the Danish Sound Toll Records listed sixty-seven passages by Scottish masters outwards (west-going) and sixty-nine passages inwards (east-going) to the Baltic. This was double the number of the previous year. Their eastward destinations were primarily

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31 PRO HCA 26/15, letters 23 September 1711; outward report; *Scots Courant*, 15 December 1710.

32 PRO HCA 26/15, letters 16 September 1710; reported as carrying fifty men on her initial passage to Lisbon; *Scots Courant*, 3 November 1711.

33 PRO HCA 26/13, letters 11 May 1708; (various spellings of Pershaw/ Preshau/ Pereshaw). Petition; SRO HCAS AC 10/73 and prize case AC 9/305, Pershaw v Stanley. Inward report; *Scots Courant*, 23 February 1711.



Danzig (38), Koeningsberg (7) and Sweden (19).<sup>34</sup> This was one of the better years in what had been a period which saw a deterioration in security in the area and by outbreaks of the plague in the Eastlands of the Baltic. This latter problem forced the Scottish Commissioners to order the customs service to set up and man a series of quarantine stations in isolated anchorages in all of the major firths and in Orkney.

The degree to which Scottish shipping responded to the post-Union trading conditions and opportunities, legal or otherwise, can be appreciated by comparing the state of the Scottish marine at the end of 1712 with that of later years. Annual national shipping statistics, collated from the Scottish head ports returns, were re-instated in 1759 (a war year). In that year the Scottish marine numbered 909 vessels totalling 47,751 tons.<sup>35</sup> This tally is inferior, in both number and tonnage, to the accumulated Scottish marine of 1712. It would therefore appear that during the intervening decades of economic stagnation (1712-25) and recovery (1726-58), the fleets of Scotland consolidated and adapted to the new trading environment rather than expanding in terms of absolute numbers or total tonnage.

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<sup>34</sup> I am grateful to Professor Hans-Christian Johansen of Odense Universitet, Denmark for access to the Danish Tolls database for the years 1661-1795 . A fuller analysis is deployed in the following three chapters.

<sup>35</sup> [G]lasgow [U]niversity [L]ibrary, MSS GEN 1075.



## CHAPTER V: SCOTTISH TRADERS IN WAR AND PEACE 1651-1755

Domestic upheavals and international wars were prime catalysts for change in the development of the Scottish marine and its supporting industries. The impact of the conflict factor during the first hundred years of Scotland's involvement in the mercantilist system (1651-1755) is therefore highly significant. War was the other, more drastic, means by which the seaborne trade of foreign rivals could be reduced and their colonies seized. As Professor Hobsbawm has aptly remarked of this age, it was 'not one in which the successful businessman was at all wedded to peace.'<sup>1</sup> In peacetime the Navigation Acts and, after 1696, an elaborate body of protectionist legislation imposed a myriad of tariffs, regulations, exemptions and bounty payments by which the nation's shipping, trade and fisheries were promoted to the exclusion of others.

### **The impact of Cromwell's invasion on Scottish shipping activity**

Scotland's bloody baptism into the new order came with the imposition of the Cromwellian Commonwealth. The fragmentary customs records for Leith for the maritime year (Martinmass to Martinmass) 1638-9 offer a pre-invasion benchmark against which the subsequent disruptions to shipping activity can be measured.<sup>2</sup> That particular year marked a milestone in Scottish history. The nation was already in ferment over Charles I's imposition of his canons and liturgy which culminated in the mass signing of the National Covenant (February 1638) in Grey Friars churchyard. As this crisis spiralled towards civil war, elements of the Royal Navy arrived in the Forth during the summer with orders to stop and search vessels for arms and dissidents.

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<sup>1</sup> E.J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution* (London, 1973), p. 87.

<sup>2</sup> The following data and table: 5.1 were extracted from tables collectively entitled *Ships into Leith 1624-1738* compiled by S. Mowat from the primary sources held at the Edinburgh City Archives (shore dues) and the Scottish Record Office (customs).



Against this background of internecine warfare the shore dues (paid by all vessels) recorded by the farmers of the customs of Leith for the maritime year commencing 11 November 1638, listed the inward passage of c.350 vessels. The vast majority were Scottish vessels sailing under Scottish masters (c.320 entries) of which one third (c.100 entries) belonged to Leith and the main havens of the Forth - Bo'ness, Prestonpans, Kinghorn, Kirkcaldy, Burntisland, Dysart, Anstruther and Pittenween. Most of the outstanding two-thirds was an assortment of small coasters from the east coast havens as far north as Elgin. A small contingent (c.30 entries) were foreign vessels, mainly from Denmark and the Baltic ports.

Just under a third of all recorded passages in the 1638 maritime year (c.132 entries) were 'foreign-going'. Some twenty years later the primegilt list (paid by all incoming Scottish-owned vessels from a foreign-going passage) of the port of Leith for the maritime year 1660-1 recorded only thirty-seven foreign-going passages - a drop of two-thirds. The Restoration compilers of the Calendar of State papers laid the blame for this severe contraction of seaborne trade squarely on the Cromwellian Union (1652-61). During the interregnum, if they are to be believed, 'almost all the ships and vessels of His Majesty's subjects of Scotland were during the last usurpation: taken, burnt or destroyed'.<sup>3</sup> They were, however, mute on the issue of the adverse impact of the English Navigation Acts on Scottish trade. Even so, and allowing for an element of retrospective propaganda in this claim, the invasion and subjugation of Scotland was undoubtedly a traumatic event for many of the Scottish ports.

Its impact warrants further investigation as the degree of adversity suffered by individual ports varied considerably. After Cromwell's victory at Dunbar (September 1650) and his unopposed entry into Leith, the parliamentary warships blockading the Forth moved northwards to support Monck during his sacking of the ports of Dundee and Aberdeen. The local commentators later claimed that the thoroughness of their

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<sup>3</sup> *Calendar of State Papers, Charles II, CXXXIII, p. 141.*



looting was such as to deny the local shippers the means to regain their seaborne trade for years to come. In the case of the port of Dundee this claim does not seem to be an exaggeration. The English sea captain Richard Franck felt compelled to write, after his visit in 1656, 'give me leave to call it deplorable Dundee, and not to be exprest without a deluge of tears'.<sup>4</sup> The Fife ports were occupied in July 1651 and also appear to have been much abused. Anstruther was described as 'very spoyled' by the seizing of vessels and the burden of maintaining soldiers quartered in the town.<sup>5</sup> Kirkcaldy, then the second port of Scotland, reported losing ninety-four vessels during this turbulent period (1644-60) in the nation's history.<sup>6</sup> Set against this tally Cromwell seems to have lost only one major English supply ship, during the early stages of the invasion, to Scottish forces.<sup>7</sup>

### **The fortification of Inverness and Ayr during Monck's subjugation of Scotland**

Seaborne supply and communications were the key to Cromwell's consolidation. Following his military success at Dunbar, the fall of the citadel at Leith gave his forces effectively gave him control of the Forth. The subjugation of the rest Scotland required the rapid seizure and fortification of key ports. Time was of the essence for these invading forces. At Inverness a citadel and quay were built with stone taken from an old chapel. To deter armed parties of highland raiders crossing the Great Glen, a forty ton vessel was built and then dragged on rollers across the six miles of land to Loch Ness where it was launched and armed with cannon.<sup>8</sup> The parliamentary naval units

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<sup>4</sup> R. Franck, *Northern Memoirs* (1658) reprinted Hume Brown, *Early Travellers.*, pp. 208-9.

<sup>5</sup> S. Stevenson, *Anstruther* (Edinburgh, 1989), p. 10.

<sup>6</sup> H. Farnie, *The Handy Book of the Fife Coast*, p. 45 as quoted by Smout, *Scottish Trade*, p. 240.

<sup>7</sup> The loss of this supply ship was a blow to Cromwell's army as she carried 10,000 pairs of shoes, 6,000 pairs of boots, 5,000 saddles, ten tons of London beer and a similar weight of biscuits - 'enough to serve Cromwell for a month'; Grant, *Edinburgh*, III, p. 152.

<sup>8</sup> A.G. Pollitt, *Historic Inverness* (Inverness, 1981), p. 110 and A.D. Cameron, 'The Hub of the Highlands', *Inverness Field Club* (Inverness, 1975), p. 237.



which arrived in the Firth of Clyde during the summer of 1652 were unopposed.<sup>9</sup> Their objective was to open a supply line for Monck's drive into the south west. This was accomplished when 'divers barks came into Ayr (9 July) with provisions for the troops, [escorted by] four frigates and several vessels for their assistance'. As with Inverness, his troops flung up a large star system citadel enclosing twelve acres to control the town and harbour, reputedly using his transports to ship masonry stripped from Ardrossan castle for the purpose.<sup>10</sup> The shippers of Ayr evidently did not benefit from either the earlier troubles nor the uninvited military establishment. Back in the benchmark year of 1638, Ayr had reported twenty 'guid ships' which were, after sustaining losses in ventures to the West Indies, down to six by 1645. When Tucker surveyed the port, four years after the arrival of Monck in the town, there was only three locally owned vessels - two boats of three and four tons and a bark of one hundred tons.<sup>11</sup>

Not all ports seem to have suffered to the same degree as Ayr, Dundee and the Fife ports. Professor Devine's re-appraisal of the experiences of the Royal Burghs of Aberdeen and Glasgow under the Commonwealth (ranked third and fourth by commerce and wealth) found the statistical evidence at odds with the dire picture painted by their commentators.<sup>12</sup> His examination of the *Shore Work Accounts* of Aberdeen and the *Register of Ship Entries* for Dumbarton (then the entrepôt for Glasgow) concluded that both burghs had maintained the kernel of their maritime trades during the imposition of the Cromwellian Union; after which time they staged a qualified recovery. Indeed, if the Dumbarton *Register* is taken as an indicator of prosperity of the upper Clyde fleets it would appear that they had flourished during the Interregnum.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Earlier the Royalist frigate *HMS Peter* had been dispatched by Charles to expedite his cause in the region, but was 'cast in at Troone' sands from which the Earl of Eglinton retrieved her guns (1650); SRO, Lothian MSS GD 40 V/24-5.

<sup>10</sup> Dunlop, *Ayr*, p. 199. When shown the building costs Cromwell is reported to have enquired if its walls were made of gold?

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Devine, 'The Cromwellian Union', pp. 1-16.

<sup>13</sup> This is also the opinion of Marwick (*The River Clyde*, p. 94) who noted that Dumbarton had the collective confidence in 1655, to build its first common quay.



## The exclusion of the Dutch from the Scottish fisheries

The Anglo-Dutch conflicts fought out in Scottish waters prolonged the misery of the east coast ports engaged in the fisheries. The eviction of the Dutch, along with the Danes, from the 'gold mine' of the fishing grounds around Scotland was a central tenet of the English *Mare Clausum* school of maritime sovereignty. At their zenith (1640) the Dutch had an estimated 500 herring busses in Shetlands waters which fished for up to four months closely supported by their 'jager' supply ships.<sup>14</sup> This harvesting of enormous wealth from the waters of the new Commonwealth was an anathema to the English mercantilist doctrine of exclusivity and its closely related interest in limiting the reservoir of able seamen available to the Dutch navy.

Commonwealth warships were consequently dispatched to the Shetlands to contest the Dutch presence in the 'grand fishing' at the outbreak the First Dutch War (1652). Indeed, only bad weather stopped Admiral Blake's fleet of eighty Commonwealth warships engaging with the Dutch defending force, led by Tromp, off Burravoe (Isle of Yell). In the subsequent pursuit down the east coast Blake captured 150 Dutch busses off Buchan Ness (Aberdeenshire), the first in a series of major blows struck against the Dutch presence in the fisheries. To deter their return or possible acts of retaliation, Cromwell ordered the building of a new fortification at Lerwick to command the Bressay Sound. Commonwealth warships were stationed in northern Scottish waters thereafter and by the end of hostilities (1654) four frigates - *Primrose*, *Duchess*, *Unicorn* and *Sun* - were enforcing the exclusion zone when not serving as escorts.<sup>15</sup> The Scottish ports did not however appear to have taken up the opportunity to

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<sup>14</sup> E. Balneaves, *Windswept Isles* (London, 1977), p. 154. The great debate between Britain and the Netherlands over the issue of 'open' and 'closed' seas is a central theme examined by C.R., Boxer, *The Dutch Seaborne Empire* (London, 1965).

<sup>15</sup> Mowat, *Leith*, p. 191-3. gives a summary of naval movements around the Forth and the north east in 1654.



join the escorted annual cod fleet to Iceland or to participate, in any significant numbers, in the northern herring fisheries during the enforced absence of the Dutch.

In the first year of peace (1655) Cromwell's ruling Council of State moved to recruit the Scots to the mercantilist cause by 'giv[ing] all due enc[o]uragement to the trade and commerce of that nation [Scotland] and to advance manufactures and fisheries there'. The Council's measures had however little impact on the war-ravaged east coast fishing ports. As the burgesses of the debt-ridden port of Anstruther reported the following year:

We hadd within this few yeares of shippes nineteen now we have only (three of them small and worth little) four, we hadd of barks five now we have but one, of late we hadd boates going to ye Orknay fishand and busching fifteen... Since...we was a burgh we had sundrie vessels sumtymes a guid many that went to the Isles fishing, this yier we have not one.<sup>16</sup>

The few foreign-going passages from the east coast ports did however benefit from the protection of the annual frigate-escorted convoy between Leith, Elsinore and the Norwegian coast. Those sailing south from Leith were escorted as far as Newcastle where the next convoy marshalled for London and hence onwards to the English Channel and the French ports.<sup>17</sup>

### **The Restoration and the Royal promotion of fishery companies**

On his restoration Charles II continued this policy of displacing the Dutch in the grand fisheries, though his motives were driven more by a sense of profit than political doctrine. His personal interest in the promotion of fishery companies went to the extent of chairing a meeting at Worcester House, attended by Lauderdale and Prince Rupert, where the fishing techniques and outfitting of herring busses and boats were discussed

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<sup>16</sup> Stevenson, *Anstruther*, p. 132.

<sup>17</sup> Mowat, *Leith*, p. 191-3.



in the greatest detail.<sup>18</sup> The outcome was the creation of a 'Council of the Royal Fishing of Great Britain and Ireland' whose primary aim was to sell royal patents to interested companies.

The strategic importance of the Shetlands to royal designs on the grand fisheries was fully recognised. The royal master mason, John Mylne, was dispatched to build the pentagonal Fort Charlotte on top of the earlier Cromwellian fortification at Brassey Sound. This, paradoxically, at a time when Charles II was ordering the demolition of the citadels at Ayr and Leith. On completion this new fortress was rarely garrisoned though its very existence was sufficient to forestall a planned invasion of the islands by the Dutch Admiral Van Gent during the Second Dutch War (July 1667). Instead he was content to wait, unopposed, in the Sound to escort home the Dutch East Indies fleet. At the end of the third and final conflict (1674), however, the Dutch returned in force to bombard the empty fort, setting half of Lerwick ablaze in the process.<sup>19</sup>

This incident is of significance as it signalled the virtual abandonment of the defence of Shetland and attempts at imposing an exclusion zone in those waters. It followed that, for well over a century thereafter, the only defence this extensive sea region had were the passing armed escorts of the annual northern convoys - the Iceland cod fleet, Greenlandwhalers whalers, Archangel traders, the vessels of the Moscovy Company and Hudson Bay Companies. The meagre naval resources that were occasionally allocated to patrol northern waters tended to congregate further south at the marshalling area of Scapa Floe in Orkney. As a result enemy raiders were allowed almost complete freedom of action in Shetland waters and the option of an unopposed north-about passage between the Atlantic and the North Sea as part of their cruising strategy.

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<sup>18</sup> GCA, Maxwell of Pollock MSS, T-PM 107/7/20/4.

<sup>19</sup> Gifford of Busta (writing in 1733) who stated that the original garrison numbered 300 men under the command of a native, Colonel William Sinclair, with twenty or thirty cannon. The annual upkeep was put at £28,000 sterling. The garrison was withdrawn towards the end of the Third Dutch War; Balneaves, *Windswept Isles*, p. 158.



Royal interest in developing the relatively unexploited in-shore fisheries of the west coast of Scotland followed a similar pattern. The monarch's open preference for fee-paying patented companies manifested itself in an obstructive edit that banned the local communities from fishing in the Firth of Clyde and adjacent lochs until 25 July of each year; 'upon pretext that the same does spoile the scooles of herring and damnifie the fishing'. As the monarch's interest in fishery companies waned this restriction was relaxed. After 1676 it became lawful for local fishermen to 'wet their nets' a month earlier, so extending the in-shore fishery season from 15 June - 25 December.<sup>20</sup>

### **The changes to Scottish overseas trading patterns**

The windfall of prizes from the Second Dutch War and the improved security situation in European waters at the end of hostilities encouraged Scottish foreign-going voyages again in reasonable numbers. The most adventurous undertaking recorded in the surviving customs books for Leith for 1667 was the departure of a flotilla of three Forth vessels - *David* of Burntisland, *Unicorn* of Queensferry and *James* of Pittenween - for Tangiers.<sup>21</sup> This armed venture was a impressive piece of opportunism undertaken in the wake of Blake's punitive expedition to the Barbary Coast which had captured and retained Tangiers harbour for the British Crown.

The same records also reveal that, when compared with the 1638-9 view, there had been a shift in regular trade patterns back towards the more mundane but regular trade to the Low Countries. Rotterdam and Amsterdam had now clearly surpassed the old staple ports of Campvere and Middelberg as the principal entrepots of the Scottish trade to the Low Countries. As the previous table suggests that the on-going change in

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<sup>20</sup> *RPC*, V, p. 183. Charles's schemes were partly obstructed by the revived Scottish Parliament's attempt at resurrecting the east coast Scottish burghs' interest in the Orkney fisheries by bestowing 'above strangers' (preferential) status on them (1660).

<sup>21</sup> Extracted from Mowat, *Ships into Leith 1624-1690* database of Leith Customs Records.



Table: 5.1 The place of embarkation of 'foreign-going' passages arriving at Leith 1638-67

Year	1638	1660	1661	1662	1663	1667
	S	P	P	P	P	C
Norway	39	6	9	19	15	6
Baltic	20	6	7	5	7	11
Germany	0	1	0	1	0	6
Low countries	28	6	8	7	6	27
England	13	8	10	6	7	21
France	35	10	12	25	10	5
Spain	4	0	4	0	1	0
America	0	0	0	0	0	2
Total	139	37	50	63	46	78

Source: SRO E71-2, Leith shore dues (S), primegold (P) & customs records (C) , [*Scottish vessels only in italics*], compiled from S. Mowat, *Ships into Leith: 1624-1690*

Scotland's foreign-going trading patterns, the subject of the Provost of Linlithgow's later discourse to the Council of Trade (1681), was well established by the late 1660s.

The recovery in Scotland's seaborne trade after the conclusion of the final Dutch war (1674) was however hampered by two domestic events. Firstly, a royal edict placed an embargo on the departure of all foreign-going vessels from Scottish ports during the months March-June 1678. This draconian measure was taken to ensure compliance with the national levy of five hundred Scottish sailors required for the Stuart navy. While the sailings of the coastal traders were technically exempt from the embargo, the loss of such a significant number of local seamen must have adversely affected all levels of shipping activity.<sup>22</sup> The second was the security crisis surrounding Argyll's Rebellion.

### **The impact of Argyll's 'Rebellion in the West' on Scottish maritime affairs**

The turbulent domestic affairs of Scotland prior to 1688 often impinged on the free movement of Scottish shipping at critical times. The Commissioners entrusted by

<sup>22</sup> *RPC*, X, pp. 304 and 374. It is tempting to suppose that the levy per port reflects the level of merchant shipping at each however this does not seem wholly compatible with known shipping data. It would seem more likely that the levy also reflected a historic contribution, the number of fishermen in the area and an element of relief for those burghs accepting a higher level of cess tax.



Charles II to contain the Scottish nation, now racked by religious and civil strife, placed security above prosperity. In 1682 their chairman, the autocratic Duke of York, returned from his brief sojourn in London and set about imposing stern and arbitrary measures aimed at tightening control over the movement of dissenters and rebels. His decree of 1684 required all masters of vessels entering and leaving Scottish ports to present a list of passengers to his officials, an onerous task that impeded commerce.

The threat from disaffected nationals aboard was dramatically underlined the following year by Argyll's 'Rebellion in the West' (April - June 1685) in support of the Duke of Monmouth. Campbell had previously fled from London to Holland where he purchased, and later secretly armed in Norway, two 'frigots' which he renamed - *Anne* (22 guns/ 190 tons) and *Sophia* (20 guns/ 243 tons).<sup>23</sup> These vessels conveyed him back to Cowal, Argyllshire, following his appointment as 'Commander of the Invasion of Scotland'. His primary mission was to create a diversion that would draw government forces north just before Monmouth made his bid for the throne in the south. The two frigates were essential to the plan and would have been the dominant force in Scottish waters had their arrival gone unopposed.

Their final approach was however shadowed by three warships of the Stuart navy - *HMS Kingfisher*, *Mermaid* and *Drake*. This flotilla had been dispatched from England under a resolute commander, Captain Hamilton, who quickly cornered his quarry at Inverary. The capture of Argyll's warships effectively put an end to his grand scheme to invade lowland Scotland. As a consequence of their loss the major rebel landing at Largs was aborted and was replaced by two smaller token landings at Greenock. Led by Lord Cochran and Major Fullarton respectively both landing parties, after a few skirmishes with the local militia, re-embarked for Cowal before Hamilton's

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<sup>23</sup> *RPC*, IX, p. 173. Argyll's agents had recruited an assorted crew including fifteen Dutchmen with the promised of a voyage to Surinam. After their capture, both vessels (with the approval of the Scottish Privy Council) were sequestrated and renamed - the *Ann* became *HMS Dumbarton* (sixth rater) and served on the Virginia station, while the *Sophia* became *HMS Sophia* (fire ship); W.L. Cowes, *The Royal Navy*, (New York, 1960) index.



flotilla arrived to entrap them. Thereafter, the rebels were driven down the length the Mull of Kintyre from which their escape was sealed off by the English warships.

In many ways the maritime aspects of the rebellion set a precedent for future incursions by English naval commanders into Scottish waters. In executing the orders of the English Lord High Admiral they paid little heed to the disruption they caused to the seaborne trade of the monarch's loyal Scottish subjects. Indeed, by July they widened their net to 'scour' the Irish Sea searching for arms and fugitives thereby extending the area of disruption. *HMS Drake* was allocated to patrol the Firth of Clyde and North Channel for the rest of the summer while *HMS Mermaid* was detached to cruise the west coast as far as Orkney. The herring fleet at Campbeltown was confined to port and all traders sailing the west coast were stopped and searched.<sup>24</sup>

There was however no compensatory windfall for the Clyde shippers as the mopping up operation was entirely an English affair. Rebel prisoners were conveyed on royal yachts to London for trial and execution and a London-bound English merchantman was chartered to carry south for public display the box containing the quartered body and head of the maltster Rumbold.<sup>25</sup> The lack of involvement of Clyde shipping can be surmised from the fact that only one petition was made to the Privy Council relating to maritime matters arising from the rebellion. That lodged by Laurence Wallace the Collector at Portpatrick, asking permission to seize a boat used to convey rebels and to restore one known to have been stolen by them.<sup>26</sup>

### **The beneficial spin-offs of conflict**

There were however other ways in which Scottish maritime affairs were influenced, for the good, by the next great political upheavals. The west coast maritime

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<sup>24</sup> Weir, *Greenock*, pp. 67-9. *HMS Drake* was probably the un-named frigate that anchored off Largs to receive Lieutenant Lawder escorted by a troop of dragoons that summer; *RPC*, XI, pp. 90, 148 and 304.

<sup>25</sup> *RPC*, XI, pp. 132 and 483.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, p. 165.



community particularly benefited from the business opportunities created by the succession of William and Mary, and the subsequent war with France. The distractions of this war allowed the Clyde shippers to resume their illegal trading to America in earnest, despite the efforts made by English naval commanders to enforce the English Navigation Acts. In home waters the need to maintain a seaborne supply to the garrison newly established at Fort William was a boon for the growing victualling industry, bringing the areas south of Ardnamurchan Point within the orbit of the Clyde ports. Likewise, a regular twice weekly dispatch boat from Portpatrick across to Donaghadee, first mooted in 1678, was established during the early 1690s at the expense of the Post Master General for Scotland. This service replaced the old *ad hoc* use of the *Mayflower* out of Irvine.<sup>27</sup>

After 1690 the number of Irish and English merchantmen using the North Channel to clear in or out of the Atlantic or heading north-about to avoid the English Channel, rapidly rose. The anchorages of the outer Firth of Clyde, notably Lochs Ryan and Campbeltown, became well-frequented marshalling and storm havens. By the end of the War of Spanish Succession (1713) the Privy Council had found it necessary to authorise fifteen pilots to operate out of Loch Ryan.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, the re-stocking of livestock slaughtered by the rebels and the mass migration of over 20,000 lowland Scots families to the Ulster provinces during the 'hungry nineties', greatly increased maritime activity in the Firth of Clyde and Galloway peninsular. Activity that was sustained thereafter.<sup>29</sup>

William's European campaigns also created a demand for military transports which placed a premium on suitable vessels. William Walkinshaw and Thomas Peters of Port Glasgow contracted their respective vessels - *Unity* (150 tons) and *James* (110

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid, V, p. 286 and X, p. 165.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, X, p. 458. William's fleet has used this haven before acrossing the North Channel in 1690.

<sup>29</sup> Outward voyages to the Ulster from the north Ayrshire and the upper Clyde ports leapt from 106 (1688-9) to 355 (1689-90); Smout, 'Overseas Trade of Ayrshire', p.63. In 1696-7 Ulster destinations dominated the passages to and from Port Glasgow (295 of 347 inward and 138 of 196 outwards); SRO, TD 64, Customs searcher's report book Port Glasgow 1696-7.



tons) - to carry soldiers to the Flanders campaign at a rate of twelve shillings sterling per month.<sup>30</sup> On the east coast Leith became firmly established as a naval repair and victualling station for the Scots Navy and convoy escorts.<sup>31</sup>

### **Scottish losses to conflict compared to those of her rivals - England and Holland**

Scottish shipping losses to war and disaster during the fifty years prior to the Darien Scheme have been put at upwards of a hundred vessels.<sup>32</sup> Set against this tally the gains made by the Clyde shippers from the troubles of the 1690s appear to be poor compensation. This simple comparison does not however fully impart the dynamic effect of conflict on setting the stage for opportunities in trade. For this to be appreciated it is necessary to consider Scottish losses and levels of wartime disruption relative to those experienced by the competing English and Dutch marines.

The commentator Coke calculated that during the Dutch Wars (1652-4, 1664-7 and 1672-4) the prizes taken by the English marine outnumbered their losses four-to-one. On the other hand Cromwell's on-going war with Spain (1655-60) incurred very heavy losses to the English marine (estimates range between 1,000 and 1,800 vessels) with few Spanish prizes to compensate.<sup>33</sup> The overall the balance of maritime power was therefore still in England's favour.

William and Anne's wars against the French (1689-1713) however were a harrowing time for the English marine. During the War of the League of Augsburg (1689-97) the English Admiralty estimated that the final number of captured English merchant vessels was around 4,000 vessels. The vast majority of these, Pepys believed, were taken in the last four years of the conflict when the French abandoned fleet actions

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<sup>30</sup> McArthur, *Port Glasgow*, p. 38.

<sup>31</sup> There had been much rivalry with Burntisland and South Queensferry for this work; Mowat, *Leith*, p. 226-7.

<sup>32</sup> R. Renwick (ed.), *Extracts from the Records of the Burgh of Glasgow Records* (Glasgow, 1912), III, p. xxi and 393.

<sup>33</sup> R. Coke, *Discourse of Trade* (1670), p. 27 as quoted by R. Davis, *English Shipping Industry*, footnote to p. 316.



and unleashed their privateering flotillas. The attrition of the English marine continued unabated during the War of Spanish Succession (1702-13). By 1707 it was estimated that a further 1,146 English vessels had been taken.<sup>34</sup>

Equally damaging was the fear of capture in southern home waters as English merchants complained that 'having of late years been such great sufferers by the ill-timing of convoys and want of cruisers, that they dare no longer engage the remainder of their estates to carry on their several trades'.<sup>35</sup> Their Dutch counterparts fared little better against the French until the introduction of the Anglo-Dutch convoy system (1710).

### **The new trading opportunities created by the war**

This high level of disruption to the operations of rival marines in established markets would appear to have provided trading opportunities for the Scots, despite the occasional loss of a vessel in the process. The Scots were able to exploit their distance from the principal theatres of war and clear access to the Atlantic to penetrate long-haul markets where survivability took precedence over carrying capacity. The southern European trades, once dominated by the Dutch, were the main target for Scotland's small 'Swedes' formula armed traders. The lure of high value cargoes was enhanced by the establishment of an English naval presence at Lisbon (after the 1703 Anglo-Portuguese Accord); the capture of Gibraltar and Minorca (1705 and 1708 respectively) and the recruitment of the Tripoli corsairs to the British war effort. All of which reduced the risk of capture in southern waters and so revitalised the direct trade from Scotland to the Iberian and Mediterranean markets.

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid, p. 317.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.. The incidence of cases raised in the Scottish High Court of Admiralty against partners who had failed to honour ransom notes, indicate that a number of Scottish vessels were captured. In one example, William Fairfoull apothecary of Arbroath, was abandoned in a French prison for six months having been 'persuaded' to go as the hostage; SRO HCAS, AC8/98, Fairfoull v Spink.



Although the number of Scottish voyages to these areas was initially small, their contribution to the domestic market was significant. Notable was the departure in 1708 of the *Neptune* from the Forth and the *Concord* of Glasgow to Livorno (Italy) for oil, coffee and Chianti. Their departure marked the return of Scottish traders, after a lengthy absence, to these highly dangerous waters.<sup>36</sup> Merchants at the more outlying Scottish ports were also encouraged by the new security situation to send out a venture. One such was the attempted voyage of the *Three Brothers* of Tain from Portmahomack (Dornoch Firth) to Lisbon with barrelled fish. The lack of local expertise in trading so far south is evident in the fact that the Inverness owners contracted an English captain and a French supercargo to ensure success.<sup>37</sup>

After 1707 the Clyde transatlantic shippers were quick to benefit from their newly legalised access to America as source of cheap vessels and shipbuilding materials. They were also in prime position to exploit the new commodities - naval stores, provisions and rice - that had been recently added (1705) to the list of enumerated goods under the English Navigation Acts. To the fore however was the promising long-term market opportunity in the re-export trade in American tobacco. This too was a consequence of the War of Spanish Succession for as British privateers cut off the French supply from her West Indian colonies, so French cruisers made good the loss with captured English Virginian tobacco. After the end of hostilities the French consumers' taste for this lighter leaf remained entrenched. This new market opportunity was seized upon by the merchant classes of Scotland who now had a legitimate right of access and a geographic advantage to exploit.

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<sup>36</sup> The *Neptune* was captured off the Barbary Coast April 1708, but re-appears trading in November 1714. It must be presumed that she was either re-captured, released or (more likely) replaced by a namesake; GCA, Shawfield MSS, 2/397, 332, 373 and 365.

<sup>37</sup> Inverness Burgh Records, MSS CTI/IB 36/1; Contract between James Dunbar and William Fraser and factors to the Captain Plowden owner. It was a troubled venture William Tolmie of Fortrose appears to have bought out Plowden before the *Three Brothers* sailed. At sea she experienced heavy weather and had to put back into Greenock with a bad leak. There the vessel was arrested for outstanding debts against Plowden causing a number of the crew to desert; SRO, HCAS, AC 10/69, Petition by Thomas Tolmie.



## The defence of Scottish waters and the convoy system after the Union

Complementing this increase in trading opportunities abroad was a substantial improvement of security within home waters during the last years of the War of Spanish Succession. After the Union, the strategic planning of the seaward defence of North Britain rested with the Lords of the Admiralty sitting in London. Their acquisition of Scottish maritime sovereignty cleared the way for a major re-organisation of naval coastal defences. Two vessels of the Scots navy - *Royal William* and *Royal Mary* - were absorbed into the British navy and diplomatically renamed *HMS Glasgow* and *Edinburgh* respectively. The third, the smaller sixth-rater Clyde escort *HMS Dumbarton Castle*, kept her name but served only a very short term under the new establishment before she was captured off Waterford after a spirited defence of her convoy in April 1708.<sup>38</sup> Of the Scottish commanders only the great opportunist, Captain Thomas Gordon, was commissioned into the British navy and given command of *HMS Leopard* (50 guns) then attached to Byng's squadron.<sup>39</sup>

The Earl of Nottingham's strategy, as Lord High Admiral of Great Britain, for bringing the war to an end was to cut off the transfusion of vital supplies to France hitherto delivered in vast quantities from the holds of prizes brought in by her privateers. This demanded effective counter-measures against the scourge of the *guerre-de-course*. To this end an elaborate system of convoys was developed to cover all the major sea lanes of the British Isles. In 1708, whilst these plans were still being finalised, the French attempted a belated major military landing in the Forth in the hope of diverting men and resources from the victorious Marlborough on the French border.

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<sup>38</sup> She was taken by a Brest privateer twice her size - an ex-Royal Navy fourth rater *Jersey* (42guns / 456 men) - which serves to illustrate the extensive use of hired naval craft by French privateers to raid the Irish Sea and St. George's Channel at this time. In this context a contemporary authority's description of the old Scots Navy as 'all very small and of little importance' seems valid; Clowes, *Royal Navy*, p. 251.

<sup>39</sup> Gordon's career; his rise from master of the *Margaret* of Aberdeen to Rear Admiral of the Russia Navy, including his collusion with Scottish Jacobites, occupies substantial sections of Grant, *Old Scots Navy*. Of the other captains; James Hamilton died in West Indies in December 1709 while Matthew Campbell was held prisoner at St. Malo, and later Dinan, until his exchange in the same year; *ibid*, pp. 356-7.



The expedition involved ten thousand soldiers conveyed, along with James in person, by a squadron of five ships-of-the-line and three privateering frigates under the overall command of Forbin, the one-time privateering commodore. The scheme was thwarted as much by Forbin's bad navigation and lack of resolve as by the size of the naval force sent against him under Admiral Byng. The only person to cover himself with glory was Thomas Gordon who had the good fortune to engage and capture off Montrose, the straggling French frigate *Salisbury*.<sup>40</sup>

That same year (1708) the Cruiser & Convoy Act was passed which allocated forty-three cruisers withdrawn from the fleet to act as convoy escorts. Twelve were sent to protect North Britain - nine on the east coast and three on the west coast. Scapa Floe, Aberdeen Bay and the firths of Clyde, Forth and Cromarty became designated marshalling areas.<sup>41</sup> By agreement, units of the Dutch navy were invited to operate in Scottish waters as escorts for the whaling fleets and the North Sea convoys. This was the basic blueprint for the defence of British trade until 1775. The deployment of such naval resources was quite beyond the means of an independent Scotland, close to bankruptcy after the failure of the Darien scheme.

The Cruiser & Convoy Act was not however immediately implemented. In the interim the Convention of Royal Burghs continued to petition for naval escorts for the Forth, Clyde and Orkney. In October 1710 the full convoy system was finally inaugurated and proved effective, although ponderous, in holding the privateering threat in check during the last years of the war. The northern coastal convoy system involved shepherding some forty vessels a time between the marshalling areas, which were usually under the direction of the Lord Provost of the head port. From there seasonal convoys set out to destinations as far afield as Archangel, the Baltic and the Atlantic

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid, p. 200. The *Salisbury* was a British warship previously taken by the French and so its re-capture ensured Gordon's promotion. The background and details of the invasion attempt are available in J.S. Gibson, *Playing the Scottish Card: the Franco-Jacobite Invasion of 1708* (Edinburgh, 1988).

<sup>41</sup> The contemporary newspapers commence reporting shipping movements from these areas from this period onwards.



(west of Kinsale).<sup>42</sup> A measure of their success can be deduced from the final tally of the English marine losses for the War of Spanish Succession. This has been estimated as low as 2,000 vessels by the time hostilities were suspended in late 1712. Such losses were more than compensated for by the 2,200 prizes taken by mainly English privateers.<sup>43</sup> All the indications are that Scottish losses and gains to warfare during this period were very low in comparison and certainly did not exceed double figures.<sup>44</sup>

The principal convoy escorts on the northern stations were all naval sixth-raters. Whilst *HMS Flamborough*, *Glasgow* and *Strumbolo* plied the sea lanes between Newcastle and Leith - *HMS Seaforth's Prize*, *Queensborough* and *Aldbrough* did this duty from the Clyde to Kinsale.<sup>45</sup> The weak link in the chain was the coast between Leith and Orkney which was patrolled by the solitary *HMS Mermaid*, when not acting as escort to the Holland convoy out of the Forth.

### **The threat from Jacobite commanded privateers in Scottish waters 1711**

The northern convoy system was never really tested as the disgrace of Forbin and the absence of the gravely ill Duguay-Trouin, terminated the operations of the larger French privateers flotillas in the North Sea after 1708.<sup>46</sup> The next generation of enemy privateers, although numerous during the spring of 1711, were much smaller vessels. Whilst they posed no threat to the escorts, they were capable of widespread disruption to local shipping activity, especially along the unguarded stretches of the north-east coast. Their tactic was to hover in pairs off the Fife, Aberdeenshire and Orkney ports bringing

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<sup>42</sup> Smout holds the opinion that Scots rarely accepted or solicited convoy from English ships; *Scottish trade*, p. 67. This may have been the situation prior to 1710, given the previous history of rough handling and pressing seaman, but attitudes on both sides would appear to have changed substantially after 1710. The shipping reports from the lowland newspapers, quoted hereafter, testify to the success of the convoy system.

<sup>43</sup> Davis, *English Shipping*, p. 317.

<sup>44</sup> This estimate is based primarily on successive contemporary newspaper reports quoted in this chapter.

<sup>45</sup> P. Crowhurst, *The Defence of British Trade* (London, 1977), pp. 349-351. *HMS Flamborough* replaced the escort *HMS Greyhound* which was wrecked on the east coast.

<sup>46</sup> Forbin was banished to internal exile after his failure to land James in the Forth in 1708.



local fishing and coastal traffic to a halt for weeks at a time.<sup>47</sup> Even in the well-patrolled firths small enemy privateers, usually commanded by zealous Scottish Jacobites based in Calais, were capable of penetrating the naval screen to spread panic in the coastal communities. Those that infested the Forth were particularly audacious, taking vessels in sight of Leith whilst two landed on the Isle of May to plunder the lighthouse.<sup>48</sup>

In the long term however the escorts and guard ships won the war of attrition as they invariably captured those raiders that lingered too long in Scottish waters. In the space of a few weeks *HMS Mermaid* took the Calais privateer *Pontchartrain* off Buchan Ness (along with her most recent prize the *Virginia Merchant* of Aberdeen) and later took her consort the *Favourit Carrel*.<sup>49</sup> The honour of capturing the most audacious privateer - the *Agrippa* - which had 'taken many prizes on the coast for several years', fell to *HMS Flamborough*.<sup>50</sup>

The east coast took the brunt of their attacks until June 1711 when the first enemy cruiser is reported in the North Channel and the Firth of Clyde. This particular incursion offers an insight into the nature of marine warfare in Scottish waters at the time and, in doing so, illustrates the vulnerability of the outlying coastal communities to enemy raiders. The intruder - the St. Malo privateer *Desmarell* (4 guns/ 70 men) - was commanded by a Scots renegade named Smith who entered the Clyde in pursuit of a Rotterdam vessel homeward bound north-about from Lisbon. The Dutchman sought safety in Loch Ryan where her crew joined forces with the male population of Stranraer (around one hundred men). This combined force was not however able to stop the long boat from the privateer putting aboard a prize crew and making off with the merchantman. The following month Smith was back in the same sea loch this time

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<sup>47</sup> *Scots Courant*, successive reports 20, 21, 27 March; 2, 9, 13, 24 April; 4, 7, 11, 16, 23 May; 2, 8 June, 3, 8, 24 September; 6 October and 5 November 1711.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*, 14 May 1711. A year later a small Calais privateer carried off the sheep from the Isle of May after landing two Aberdonian ransomees; Clark, *Aberdeen*, pp. 112-3.

<sup>49</sup> SRO, HCAS, AC 8/128 and 131, Applications by Captain Collier to have them declared prize..

<sup>50</sup> The *Agrippa* was cornered off the Bass Rock; SRO, HCAS, AC8/129, application by Captain Howard to have her declared prize. *HMS Strumbolo* was at the scene of the capture have just taken a smaller privateer in the same area.



chasing the *Expedition* galley of Port Glasgow on her outward passage to Belfast and the West Indies. On this occasion his prize crew only succeeded on running their new charge onto the Skar rocks at high tide. Smith then threatened to burn her unless her master agreed to a ransom of £300. A week later, however, the security of the Galloway peninsular and the Firth of Clyde was restored when the *Desmarell* was captured by an armed packet - the *Dolphin* of Glasgow (35 tons/ 10 guns/ 60 men) - on her run to Belfast with dispatches.<sup>51</sup>

The sense of public indignation these renegade captains incited, on both sides of the border, was evident from the treason trials and public executions to which they were subjected when captured. The 'pirate' Alexander Dalzeil, the notorious Scottish commander of the *Agrippa* privateer, is a prime example. After his capture in the Forth he was not tried before the Scottish High Court of Admiralty for piracy but sent in chains to the Old Bailey for trial under the Treason Act of 1708.<sup>52</sup> He was subsequently publicly executed (1713) in London, even though hostilities had effectively ceased the previous year and most prisoners-of-war had been exchanged.<sup>53</sup>

The scares of 1711 were however the exception rather than the rule and mainly affected the outlying ports. Under the protection of the convoy system Scottish merchantmen operating out of the major ports flourished in both coastal and overseas trading. During those first years of the Anglo-Dutch naval collaboration, at least five Clyde vessels availed themselves of escort protection to trade to Archangel, then Russia's sole entrepôt prior to the opening of St. Petersburg in 1714.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> *Scots Courant*, 2 June, 13 and 17 August 1711. Smith may have been the Aberdonian Jacobite, Alexander Smith, who was prosecuted in December 1693 by the Lord Advocate for hiring out a French privateer. Smith was caught while cleaning his hull at Sanda Island, in the entrance to the firth, which would indicate that he has been cruising for some considerable time. Prize case; SRO, HCAS, AC8/130 Application by Captain Russell to have her declared prize.

<sup>52</sup> This Act of Parliament passed after the failed 1708 invasion required only one witness to convict a Jacobite and had caused uproar in Scotland as it was perceived as it usurped Scots Law (which had required two witnesses) as guaranteed by the Act of Union.

<sup>53</sup> *Scots Post Boy*, 26 June 1712.

<sup>54</sup> Convoy reports; *Scots Courant*, 10 March 1711 and 9 June 1712. The vessels were the *Janie*, *Expedient* galley and *Viligant* of Port Glasgow and the *James* and *Hope* of Greenock. The *Janie* was wrecked and her cargo was salvaged by the *James*; *ibid*, 24 April 1711.



## The Fifteen Rebellion and its effect on Scottish maritime affairs

After the Treaty of Utrecht (1713) the peace with France held firm for nearly two decades and so political conditions were generally favourable for Scottish overseas traders. This accord was the product of diplomatic moves undertaken on the death of Queen Anne to end Britain's isolation in Europe and to secure international recognition of the Hanoverian Succession. The moment for reconciliation with France came with the death of Louis XIV (September 1715) when Philip V of Spain challenged the legitimacy of the Regent Orleans' administration. Through this need for mutual recognition, the governments of France and Britain made their peace. In the process James in exile lost his principal backer at a time when the benefits of the Union had eroded support for his cause in lowland Scotland.

In such a changing political climate the Fifteen Rebellion in the North was undertaken without French naval support or any hope of military invasion. Furthermore, Byng's squadron in the English Channel ensured that the local Jacobites did not receive arms or supplies covertly out of the French ports in contravention of the new Barrier Treaty. Mar's rising in the North East for the Old Pretender was therefore destined to be a localised land campaign whose only hope of success was a decisive and quick victory. After the inconclusive Battle of Sheriffmuir, fought on the same day as the surrender of the English Jacobite host at Preston, the cause was lost. Government forces led by the Duke of Argyll recovered Burntisland and the Fife ports in December, allowing Dutch reinforcements to be landed in time for his march north. When James was finally landed at Peterhead from a French fishing boat (2 January 1716) his army had already scattered. He spared them further retribution by re-boarding, along with Mar, the *Forerunner* at Montrose for France (4 February 1716).<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Aldridge, 'Jacobitism', p. 87.



The short duration of this disastrous episode in Scottish history hardly allowed time for any major naval operations to get underway in Scottish waters or for the disruption to seaborne trade to spread beyond the north-east coast. In the months following James departure, a few belated seizures were made at sea by the commanders of the *HMS Deal Castle* and *Royal Ann* galley while cruising the east coast.<sup>56</sup> Of much greater consequence to Scottish maritime affairs was the central government's decision to strip the ordnance from the fortifications raised at a number of the east coast ports, in order to deny any further Jacobite uprisings a fortified harbour from which to defy the Royal Navy.

As part of the 'Triple Alliance' (concluded in 1717 by Britain, France and the Austrian Empire) the Regent Orleans was obliged to banish James at first to the papal city of Avignon and finally to Italy. The Regent also found it expedient to finally implement the full terms of the Treaty of Utrecht and the Barrier Treaty (1713). These required France to demolish the near impregnable defences and sluices of Dunkirk and the neighbouring Fort Mardyck. In so doing, the Dunkirk privateering fraternity, which had proved such a potent force during the *guerre de course* era, was scattered south to St. Malo and Morlaix and north to the warring ports of the Baltic.

### **The rise of militarism in Europe and its effect on Scottish overseas trade**

During the period 1717-31 the spirit of the Anglo-French accord was largely maintained despite the schemes of the residual Jacobite element at the French court. The mutual need was to preserve the Alliance against the security threats brewing in both northern and southern European waters. In the Baltic the clash of the ambitions of the militaristic 'hero kings' - Charles XII of Sweden and Czar Peter of Russia - sparked

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<sup>56</sup> They were petty affairs involving the arrest of three small local vessels for allegedly carrying the goods of the known rebel, Henry Crawford of Crail; SRO, HCAS AC 9/559 and 565 Willis v Short. *HMS Deal Castle* had served as an escort with *HMS Sheerness* and *Penanze* on the Leith - London route.



the Great Northern War (1700-21) which involved most of the states in the Baltic region and their continental allies. In the Mediterranean the collision of Austrian and Spanish ambitions over Sicily threatened to ensnare British interests in that sea area. The impact of these conflicts on Scottish overseas trade to the contested regions was, as will be demonstrated, both immediate and direct. Less apparent however was their influence in diverting Scottish entrepreneurial energies away from the traditional European north-south trades towards the transatlantic colonial trades.

The crisis years were 1715-20 when Sweden moved against British interests in the Baltic in retaliation for her part in the recruitment of Holland into what was now the 'Quadruple Alliance'. As a mark of his contempt for the House of Hanover, Charles XII granted refuge to prominent Jacobites from the failed Fifteen Rebellion, notably in the Courland area of the Baltic. He then raised the general state of tension at sea by passing the *Ordinance of Privateer* (1715) which set in place the option of unleashing Swedish privateers on British vessels found trading in the Baltic without formally declaring war. Moreover, after his invasion of Norway (1718) his navy had access to North Sea bases from which to raid the east coast of Britain.

As it transpired however most of his naval forces were committed to the eastern Baltic leaving only a few ill-equipped privateers to prosecute the war in the west. A number of the Gothenburg-based privateers were manned by ex-Dunkirkers and Jacobites, such as the Scotsman John Norcross. They took a few passing Scottish vessels before the death of Charles XII halted such offensive action.<sup>57</sup>

In Mediterranean waters, Britain's relations with Spain reached a state of open hostility after Byng's total destruction of the Spanish fleet off Cape Passaro (July 1718). This act of war brought instant retaliation from the Spanish Prime Minister Alberoni who ordered the seizure of all British merchantmen found in Spanish ports. To take the

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<sup>57</sup> Details of Scottish renegades at Gothenburg are available in A. F. Stuart, 'Sweden and the Jacobites, 1719-20', *Scottish Historical Review*, XXIII, pp.111-127. One Scottish vessel taken in Gothenburg was under the command of David Pershaw, one time privateer commander for Thomas Gordon. He exploited the moves towards peace to sell his cargo of herring, before it was condemned, to the Swedish government, SRO, HCAS AC 9/926 Maisters v Gordon.



war to Britain, a grand scheme was hatched with a faction within the Swedish court whereby a Spanish-led invasion of England was planned in tandem with a Swedish descent on the eastern seaboard of Scotland from the Norwegian coast. To carry out this plan Ormonde's Irish Jacobites, waiting in northern Spain, were to be escorted by elements of the Spanish navy. In the meantime, three Swedish men-of-war were to be delivered to a French port for use by the Old Pretender.<sup>58</sup>

This master plan failed however to materialise. Charles XII was militarily over-committed in the Eastlands and lacked the naval power to deliver a military force from Norway. The Swedish warships assigned to convey James from France were consequently stopped from sailing. In the south the 'Second Spanish Armada' - five men-of-war and twenty-two transport - was dispersed by violent storms off Cape Finisterre and never reached Ormonde's Jacobites waiting at Corunna.<sup>59</sup>

Although the grand invasion scheme had collapsed, a small Spanish flotilla managed to avoid interception by a British naval detachment of five frigates to reach Scottish waters. This expedition was made up of two Spanish frigates carrying Don Pedro de Castor's regiment of three hundred men from Paajes, under the overall command of Earl Marischal.<sup>60</sup> It proved to be a disaster as 274 Spanish soldiers of the original landing party were eventually rounded up in Glen Shiel by Major General Wightman and marched to London. From there they were immediately repatriated to Spain under a Swiss guard thereby ending what had become a diplomatic embarrassment.<sup>61</sup>

Soon afterwards the Swedes also withdrew their direct support for the Jacobite cause. This was hastened by the appearance off Stockholm of Sir John Norris's squadron, in company with a Dutch fleet, which persuaded the newly installed King of

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<sup>58</sup> The arrival of the latter was under pretence of calling-in while sailing south to found a Swedish colony on the pirate haven of St Mary's Isle (Madagascar); Aldridge, 'Jacobitism', pp. 87-8.

<sup>59</sup> *Cambridge Modern History*, VI, pp. 104-106.

<sup>60</sup> The pursuing British warships -*HMS Worcester*, *Enterprise* and *Flamborough* - slipped close inshore flying the Spanish flag, catching their encampment at Eilean Donan Castle wholly unprepared; *Ibid*, p. 89.

<sup>61</sup> *Edinburgh Evening Chronicle*, 23 June 1719.



Sweden to make his peace with Britain, thereby ending Jacobites hopes of a Swedish-led invasion.

French inspired invasion scares however continued to interfere with the progress of Scottish traders abroad. In 1719 the ever vigilant British Ambassador to the French court, Lord Stair, sent a stream of alarmist reports gathered by his spy network, warning of military preparations for yet another projected Jacobite landing. As a precaution a British naval squadron was discreetly fitted out so as not to jeopardise Anglo-French relations.<sup>62</sup> The result of this continuing turmoil was that Scottish traders found in the English Channel were stopped and searched by both British and French men-of-war. Likewise, wary French officials resorted to obstructive and lengthy administrative techniques to discourage their presence in French ports.

Peacetime trading conditions in the Mediterranean stabilised when Spain finally accepted the terms of the Alliance and acknowledgement of the Hanoverian Succession (1720). As Spain was the last major financial backer of the Old Pretender, her withdrawal of support meant the Jacobitism became a dormant force in British and European politics for the next two decades.

## **The overall effect of war and security scares on Scottish shipping movements**

### **1685 - 1724**

The effect of these wars and security scares on the general level of Scottish maritime activity in the Baltic trades is evident from the Danish Sound Toll Records. This continuous series of data recorded all passages 'outwards' from the Baltic (going

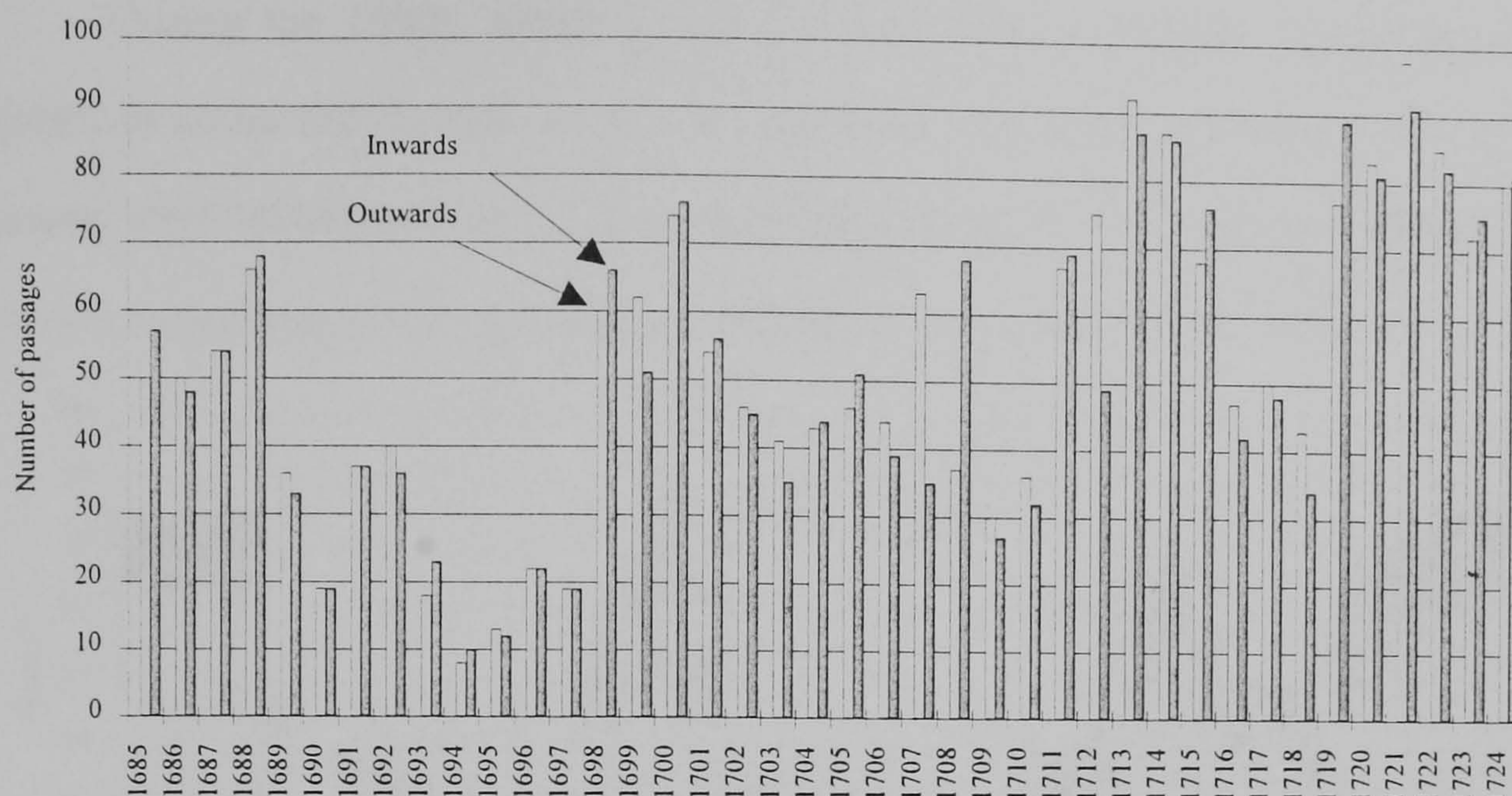
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<sup>62</sup> The second Earl Stair, son of the Lord Advocate, was recalled the following year. An interesting example of French diplomatic caution at this time was the arrest of the renegade Norcross on his arrival at a French port in 1717 with a Inverness owned vessel as prize. His Swedish privateer and crew were allowed to sail home to Gothenburg but he was handed over to the English authorities; Wilkins, *Northern Shores*, p. 26.



west) and all 'inwards' passages (going east).<sup>63</sup> As the following table demonstrates, the

Table: 5.2 The impact of war and security scares on Scottish passages through the Sound 1685-1724



Source: *Danish Sound Tolls* database compiled by H.C. Johansen (Odense Universitet, Denmark)

sharpest decline in Scottish passages was during the war years of the 1690's when only eight Scottish masters voyaged to the Baltic in 1694.

After the conclusion of the War of the League of Augsburg (1697) there was a rapid recovery which lasted until the outbreak of the War of Spanish Succession (1702-1713). With the resumption of the French *guerre de course* in North Sea, the number of Scottish passages was again adversely affected. By 1710 however the success of the Anglo-Dutch naval collaboration encouraged an upsurge in the number of Scottish vessels passing through the Sound for the remaining war years.

The next substantial dip in passage numbers was during the 1715-19 security crisis in the Baltic commencing with the Swedish *Ordinance of Privateer*. When open hostilities finally broke out at sea, during the short lived War of the Quadruple Alliance

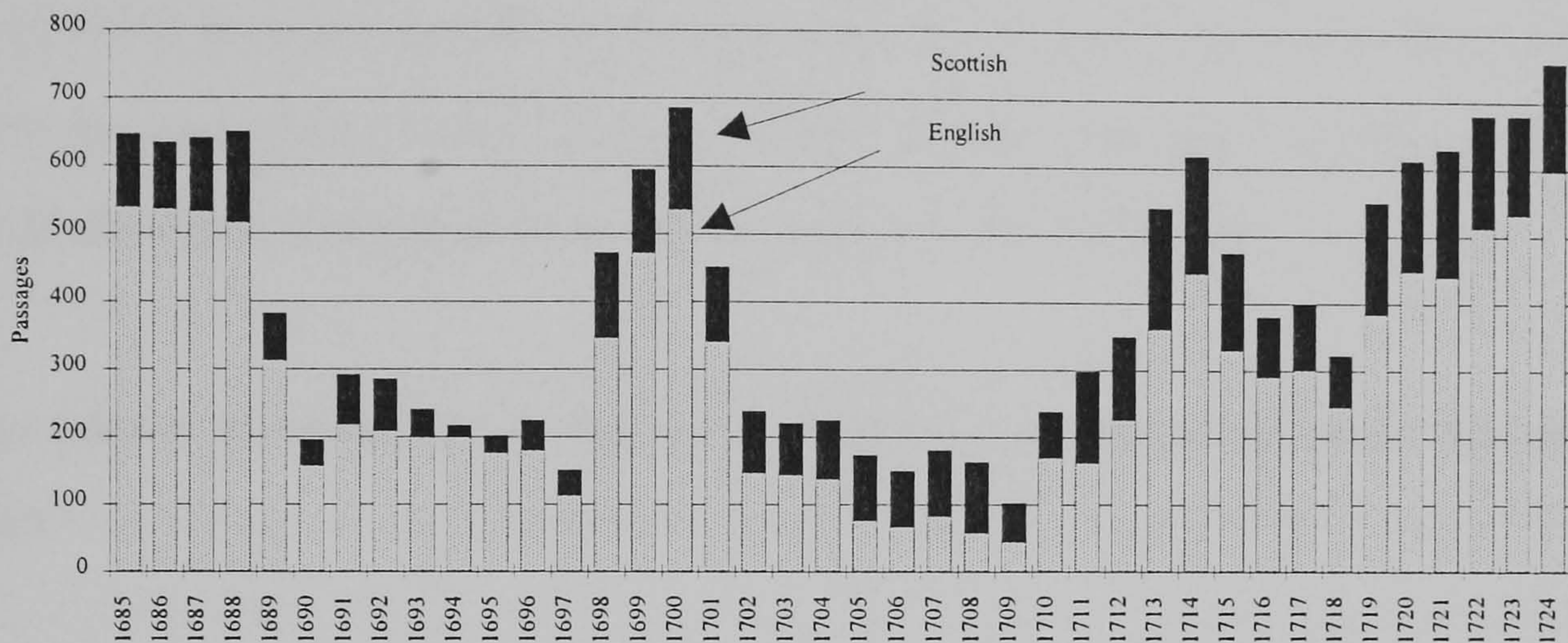
<sup>63</sup> The occasional small mis-match in any given year, was probably due to a few vessels being caught ice bound late in the season or captured/ sold/ wrecked/ detained for repair in the Baltic. The limitations of this source of shipping data are well known; primarily that they do not specifically name the vessel, its tonnage or home port passing through the Sound. However, as the domicile of the Scottish master was usually that of the home port of vessel during this early period - the data listed in table: 5.2 can be held to display the levels of Scottish shipping activity to the Baltic during the years of war and peace.



(1718-20), it was largely contained within the Baltic and was a naval affair involving a few punitive Anglo-Dutch naval actions against the Swedes.

During the 1690s, when all factors seemed to conspired against the Scottish interest at home and abroad, as few as eight per cent of all passages made by British masters were undertaken by Scottish domiciled masters. The recovery of their normal

Table: 5.3 Passages made in and out of the Baltic by English and Scottish masters 1685 - 1724



Source: *Danish Sound Tolls*. The maximum number of Scottish vessels involved can be calculated by dividing by two the number of Scottish passages. As quite a number of masters made three or more voyages per year this figure in peacetime must be considered high.

share of the peacetime carrying trade (c.27%) followed the cessation of hostilities in 1698. As the above table indicates during the early years of the War of Spanish Succession, when the English marine suffered their heaviest losses, the Scottish masters increased their share of British originating passages from thirty-eight per cent (in the first year of the war) to sixty-four per cent by 1709. By 1710 however the improvement in the security situation, with the introduction of the Anglo-Dutch convoy system, brought a strong recovery in English and Dutch shipping activity in the North Sea. As a consequence the Scottish share of the conveyance of British trade halved to, a more typical, twenty-nine per cent.

The ups-and-downs in the number of passages made by Scottish masters followed those of their English and Dutch rivals. As to be expected, the overall the number of passages leapt during the years of peace and contracted in wartime in direct response to the threat of capture. During the 1715-20 crisis in the Baltic the combined



number of passages made by British and Dutch masters slumped to well under half the annual peacetime number as they reacted to the Swedish threat.

When formal hostilities were finally declared by the Swedes it was mainly a naval affair.<sup>64</sup> With the conclusion of the Great Northern War the number of voyages made by the Anglo-Dutch masters in the Baltic trade gradually recovered, reaching pre-war levels in 1722, and then advanced rapidly more than doubling by 1725. In the more competitive peacetime conditions the Scottish masters accounted for between twenty to thirty per cent of all passages made by British masters who were, in turn, beginning to erode the Dutch dominance of the Baltic trade from 1712 onwards.

### **The advent of round-about trading by Scottish vessels in European waters after 1707**

The other highly significant change revealed by the Danish toll records was the advent of regular 'triangular' or 'round-about' trading by Scottish masters following the Union.<sup>65</sup> Prior to 1707 Scottish vessels trading to the Baltic, the vast majority from the Forth and the north-east ports, had been effectively excluded from working out of the English ports by the levy of double duty as a 'foreign vessel'. Their normal sailing pattern was therefore to run directly from Scotland to the Baltic and back with an occasional foray to a Continental staple port.

After 1707 however Scottish traders, as full members of the British mercantilist system - began to switch their attention to serving the English market and those of her allies, principally Portugal. Such access presented the owners and masters of Scottish vessels new opportunities to emulate the Dutch as contracted carriers to other nationals. It also allowed the Scots to 'trade-up' cargoes thereby breaking free from the historic

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<sup>64</sup> Only a paltry ninety-eight British vessels took out a letter of marque against the Swedes. The only Scottish vessel was the Dunbar whaler the *Happy Janet* (200 tons) ; PRO, HCA 26, commission 9 July 1719.

<sup>65</sup> Appendix C. Table: 5.4.



limitations to trade imposed by the low value of local commodities in the wider European market. This trend first gathered momentum with the improvement in security after 1710. The conclusion of the War of Spanish Succession (effectively 1712) produced a short-lived surge in the number of secondary destinations before the poor state of security in the Baltic once again deterred Scottish traders.

The end of the Great Northern War (1720) did not however signal a quick return to normal trading levels as the spread of pestilence during the next two years - through Portugal, France into the Eastlands - hindered the free movement of vessels and caused a number of Scottish masters to cancel their intended passages to the stricken areas.<sup>66</sup> By January 1722, the Swedish authorities were demanding passports and certificates of health from all British ships trading in their area. Similarly, all vessels arriving in Scottish waters from the affected regions were required to air their cargo and undergo a forty day quarantine.<sup>67</sup>

Around the same time Scottish masters heading south-about, through the English Channel, to French or Portuguese ports faced the additional hazard of capture from three Algerine corsairs who had exploited the distractions of the Northern War to raid beyond the Bay of Biscay. This was a major security breach which caused general havoc in the southern approaches to the English Channel for nearly two years. The security situation was not fully retrieved until 1722 when further direct naval action was taken against their North African bases.<sup>68</sup> It was therefore not until the mid-1720's that the hectic domestic conditions and turbulent European affairs of the preceding three decades gave way to a more settled period in seaborne trade.

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<sup>66</sup> *Edinburgh Evening Chronicle*, 17 February 1721. An example of litigation arising from cancellation of a voyage due to plague fears was that instigated by the Edinburgh merchant Thomas Mitchell against James Blair master of the 40 ton *Margaret* of South Queensferry which should have delivered coal to Bordeaux and received a cargo of wine from Mitchell's factor, Robert Gordon; HCAS, AC 9/840.

<sup>67</sup> *Edinburgh Evening Chronicle*, 19 January 1722.

<sup>68</sup> First attacks reported; *ibid*, 23 July 1719. The Algerine privateer *White Horse*, Solomon Ryce, took (and later released) four Scottish vessels returning from Bordeaux; the *Mary* of Eyemouth, the *James and Rachel*, the *Edinburgh Galley*, and the *May* of Leith; SRO, HCAS, AC 9/985.



An indication of the new scale of the involvement of Scottish vessels in round-about trading on the European north-south routes can be gleaned from the legal disputes that arose between owners and masters. In 1725 Alexander Simpson - the tenant of Balbethie and one-sixth owner of the *Alexander* of Pittenween - sued his master for his share of the profits on no less than thirty passages made by this vessel to Danzig, Hamburg, Norway, France and Lisbon.<sup>69</sup> Around the same time James Murray of Edinburgh - sole owner of the *James* of Leith - pursued his captain for neglect of his charge during an sixteen month round-about trading venture which took her from; Leith to Lisbon, Scilly Isles, Cadiz, back to the Scilly Isles, Alicante, Ostend, Bimmell and, finally back Leith.<sup>70</sup>

In such incidences the ability to record the passages and earnings generated by these intermediate overseas passages wholly eluded the 'political arithmetic' of the customs service of the time and, as a consequence, has received since little attention. Indeed, when this omission is considered along side the unrecorded activity in smuggling and coastal trading to England and Wales, the inescapable conclusion is that the direct trades hold an over-inflated position in Scotland's 'ballance of trade' figures for the eighteenth century. The trade statistics by *official values* are therefore at best an indicator of the legally declared bi-lateral overseas trade of the nation.

### **Scottish shipping in the colonial trades**

Leading the slow economic recovery after the mid-1720s, that lifted both England and Scotland out of the economic doldrums, was the upturn in the seaborne trade in colonial commodities. The major opportunities fell to the west coast shippers to exploit their north-westerly location in the expanding Atlantic economy and Irish trades. After the conclusion of hostilities with France, the seemingly ever-expanding European

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid, AC 9/882 Simpson v Donaldson.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, AC 9/882 and 9/6397.



market for tobacco created a short-lived boom that attracted the shippers from many of the ports of mainland Britain to the Chesapeake. So much so that by 1721 the area was experiencing a glut of shipping. The local commentator Robert Carter reported 'a swarm of ships in all our rivers' and counted some forty vessels in both the Rappahannock and York Rivers. The supply of available tobacco was insufficient to provide all with cargoes which caused freight charges to tumble from a wartime peak of £13 to £8 per ton by that year.<sup>71</sup>

In the long term such narrow profit margins would benefit the lower running cost Scottish traders by allowing them to squeeze out many of their English rivals. In the short term however the chartered English hull remained a necessary element in the Clyde's rise in an uncertain market. Their continued presence is evident from the sizeable number of Admiralty Court actions instigated at Edinburgh by Workington and Whitehaven masters and owners against Glasgow merchants for non-payment or breach of charters to the Chesapeake.

#### **A view of foreign-going activity from the Clyde ports 1721-2**

A view of the Clyde foreign-going fleet at this time can be reconstructed from shipping intelligence sent by a Greenock agent to the *Edinburgh Evening Courant*. His reports were regularly published from January 1721 until October 1722. During that twenty-one month period he logged some fifty reports of foreign-going voyages to and from the upper Clyde ports. This was around the time that the English tobacco lobby was launching its first vitriolic parliamentary campaign against the Scottish traders. His reports indicate that the Clyde's Atlantic-going vessels, though firmly established, had hardly increased in number or frequency of voyages since the earlier view available from the post-Union sample year of 1711. Of the thirty-nine reported arrivals,

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<sup>71</sup> A.P. Middleton, *The Tobacco Coast* (Maryland, 1989), p. 323.



seventeen conveyed tobacco (sixteen from Virginia and one from Maryland). Eight of these tobacco carriers belonged to Whitehaven, seven were listed as 'of Greenock' or 'of Glasgow' while Londonderry and Maryland provided the remaining two vessels. The direct importing of sugar from the West Indies, on the other hand, was marginally more in the hands of the Port Glasgow shippers, with six out of the nine incoming cargoes carried in Clyde-owned vessels.

A handful of Clyde vessels (possibly only two) were involved in the triangular slave trade. The report of the safe arrival of the *Hanover* of Port Glasgow from St. Christopher with sugar ended a trading voyage of one slaver which had commenced in 1719 on the account of Robert Bogle Junior and four other Glasgow merchants. Her middle passage involved slaving from the Gulf of Guinea to St. Kitts in the West Indies. Her sister ship - the *Loyalty* of Port Glasgow - was less fortunate as she was taken by pirates while attempting the same middle passage.<sup>72</sup> Her loss, along with the antagonism of the Royal Africa Company, probably killed off any further direct involvement by Glasgow merchants and their vessels in this trade.

His reports of out-going passages, for reasons that are not immediately apparent, numbered only eleven. Of significance was the clearance of the *Christian* of Fort William for Virginia which underlined the capability of the more remote undeveloped ports to support a major venture now and then. Another was the advertising of cargo and passengers, weeks in advance of its departure, for the brig *Jean & Mary* of Boston on her fairly regular homeward passages from Greenock. Finally there was the passage by the *Houston* Galley of Glasgow to Holland and Archangel with tobacco. The choice of the last destination was to avoid clashing with the Russia Company of London which was then vigorously defending its monopoly at the more accessible port of St. Petersburg. The Greenock agent also noted the direct importing of Scandinavian iron

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<sup>72</sup> The passage of the *Hanover* was the subject of legal action; SRO, HCAS, AC 9/1042, Horseburgh (supercargo) v Bogle. The capture of the *Loyalty* of Glasgow is noted in; *ibid*, AC 9/718, Daniel v Graham.



and deals (first documented in the 1690s) in vessels returning to their home ports in the Firth of Clyde from Northern Europe.

### **Ship and cargo management**

The 'master and supercargo' system of ship management remained prevalent at this time, especially on the east coast. Under this system the master, as sole or part owner of the vessel, often traded on his own account on the regular short-haul trades. When contracted however or venturing to new markets a 'supercargo' experienced in dealing with matters pertaining to the disposal and acquisition of cargoes was taken along. The voyage of the *Christian* of Leith (70 tons) to Newfoundland (1726-7) with a small cargo of thirty-two barrels of biscuits is a well documented example of the shortcomings of this trading system. The journal of the novice supercargo, Edward Burd Junior, reveals a master and crew attempting their first transatlantic passage was well as his own inadequacies in dealing with the Newfoundland fishermen. Their subsequent passage to Barcelona to trade their dried Newfoundland cod for Spanish brandy was managed little better.<sup>73</sup>

The venture was instigated by the highly energetic London-based Scottish merchant Claud Johnson, and is all the more interesting as both locally and Icelandic caught white fish was then readily available and regularly exported directly from Scotland to Catholic Southern Europe.<sup>74</sup> It may well be that the age-old problem of finding an adequate profit from the out-going cargo (biscuits) decided the first port-of-

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<sup>73</sup> SRO, RH9/14/102. An analysis of the business aspects of this voyage is available in T. McAloon, 'A Minor Merchant in General Trade: the case of Edward Burd 1728-39', *Scottish Themes*, pp. 17-27 and R.K. Hanny, 'Gibraltar 1727' *Scottish Historical Review* (1918), XVI, pp 325-334.

<sup>74</sup> Inverness Burgh Records, CTI/ INV/ M 11/1-8 contains extensive correspondence on local fisheries and exporting to Europe. The letter books of Baillie John Steuart (c1722-5) indicate that he was regularly trading to Barcelona and Lisbon from Inverness. In one such venture his vessel the *Margaret* was sent to Le Harve and back with barrelled salmon and 25,000 cod (1722). Forth vessels were engaged in this direct trade from Aberdeen.: SRO, HCAS, AC 9/1004, Whyte v Hill.



call rather than the superiority of dried Newfoundland cod over salted Scottish cod on the Iberian market.

The degree of business competence and integrity of the supercargo often decided the ultimate profitability of the voyage. He had the final say in such matters as; port-of-call, duration of stay, disposal and purchase of the cargo. In the case of the unwarranted six month detention of the *Squirrell* in the worm-infested waters off St. Kitts (1722-3) the owners charged the supercargo, rather than the master, with gross mismanagement of the vessel.<sup>75</sup> The solution to this problem was to employ Scottish and English factors residing abroad or engage a foreign firm with intimate knowledge of the local market to dispose and acquire cargoes and to instruct the master as to his next best course of action.<sup>76</sup> The Clyde tobacco merchants, with their closer links with the Scottish network in the Americas and with agents at most major ports in western Europe, were at the forefront of this move to dispense with the supercargo during the following decades. This change in ship and cargo management resulted in a higher utilisation rate of their transatlantic vessels.<sup>77</sup>

### **The Clyde ports locational advantage in war and peace**

Whilst the state of security in Northern European and Mediterranean waters remained volatile, the shippers of the Firth of Clyde benefited from their north-westerly location. Daniel Defoe, writing around the same time as the passage of the *Christian*, summed up this advantage:

it be calculated, how much sooner the voyage is made from Glasgow to the capes of Virginia, than from London, the difference will be made up in the freight, and in expense of the ships, especially in time of war, when the channel

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<sup>75</sup> SRO, HCAS, AC 9/1022, Clark v Inglis.

<sup>76</sup> The use of English factors at Bordeaux is mentioned in McAloon, 'A Minor Merchant', pp. 17-27.

<sup>77</sup> This is the main thrust of Dell's analysis; R.F. Dell, 'The operational record of the Clyde tobacco fleets', *Scottish Economic and Social History* (1982), II, pp. 1-17.



is thronged with privateers, and ships wait to go in fleets for fear of enemies, the Glasgow vessels are no sooner out of the Firth of Clyde, but they stretch away to the north-west, are out of the road of the privateers immediately, and are often at the capes of Virginia before the London ships get clear of the channel. Nay, even in times of peace, there must always be allowed, one time with another, at least fourteen or twenty days difference in the voyage, both going out and coming in, which, taken together, is a month or six weeks.... and, considering the wear and tear, victuals and wages, this makes a considerable difference.<sup>78</sup>

Defoe's weighting on the Clyde's locational advantage in wartime has since been re-appraised by learned opinion anxious to focus on the peacetime operational advantages, to which Defoe alludes in his last sentence.<sup>79</sup> Analysis of the contemporary shipping intelligence seems however to verify Defoe's emphasis on the wartime advantage as essentially correct, at least for the formative period up to 1775. In wartime the Clyde offered the most north-westerly sheltered deep-water ports and anchorages for vessels going north-about or running the Atlantic via the North Channel, far removed from the hotly contested St. George's and English Channels to the south. The 'nay even in peace' advantages over London would also hold good for all the west coast ports of Britain, from Bideford northwards.

Against such competitors the Clyde's merchants looked to cut costs whilst increasing their control in their share of the Atlantic trades. Both these objects were met by replaced chartered English vessels with Clyde-owned ocean-going vessels.<sup>80</sup> It cannot be coincidence that those English ports most involved in chartering

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<sup>78</sup> D. Defoe, 'A tour through Great Britain' (1727) as quoted by McUre, *Glasgow*, p. 313.

<sup>79</sup> Dell laid great emphasis on the Clyde's geographic position in peacetime as 'Glasgow's first advantage' in the Atlantic trade. He considered, without elaborating, that its distance from the cruising grounds of enemy privateers, was as 'an added bonus'; Dell, 'Clyde tobacco fleets', p. 3.

<sup>80</sup> Examples of deeds of ownership of Port Glasgow Atlantic-going vessels are available; GCA, Dunlop of Shawfield MSS B10/15/ 2478,4528,4508, 4532 and 4842.



(Whitehaven, Lancaster and Liverpool) were to the fore in the parliamentary campaigns mounted against the Scots in the tobacco trade around this time.

The acquisition of the necessary shipping stock was well advanced by 1735 when the early Glasgow historian and commentator Gibson compiled a *List of ships, brigantines and sloops belonging to the Clyde* which he considered to be 'pretty near the truth'.<sup>81</sup> In it he catalogued sixty-seven vessels whose combined tonnage did not exceed 5,600 tons; a number of which were from the lower Clyde harbours (Ayr, Irvine and Saltcoats).<sup>82</sup> From the trades he apportions to each of the foreign-going vessels it is clear that the upper Firth of Clyde ports had made their committal move in the conveyance of colonial commodities with twenty-seven Atlantic traders - eighteen to America and nine to the West Indies. A further nine were destined to Northern Europe and five to Southern Europe, leaving six to serve London.

By then the Glasgow merchants had taken over the re-export trade through the Scottish ports as well as the internal demand for tobacco. Hogsheads destined for the east coast of Scotland were mostly always landed first at the Clyde ports and carted overland by the Kilsyth road to Bo'ness and Alloa or delivered directly to the east coast port from Virginia by a Clyde vessel.<sup>83</sup>

### **The port of Leith 1734-5**

The rise of the Clyde tobacco trade has tended to obscure the fact that Leith, as the port of Edinburgh, remained the busiest Scottish harbour throughout the era. Although much of the incoming tonnage was locally shipped coal and foodstuffs, Leith also had a thriving foreign-going trade. During the years 1734-5 some fifty-five

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<sup>81</sup> J. Gibson, *The History of Glasgow* (Glasgow, 1777), pp. 210-11.

<sup>82</sup> Other west coast ports occasionally ventures a vessel . e.g.. the Fort William owned *Charming Molly* sent to America from the Clyde in 1736; SRO Lorn MacIntyre MSS 1279, p. 3.

<sup>83</sup> An example of the latter was the arrival of the *Concord* of Port Glasgow at Dundee from Virginia with 249 hogsheads in 1730; Dundee Archive and Record Centre, CE 70/1, Collector of Dundee to the Board, 18 June 1730.



foreign-going voyages - involving around forty individual vessels - were reported entering in and out of Leith's chronically congested basin.<sup>84</sup> The Spanish and Biscay trades dominated the list and were well established with a number of masters undertaking two voyages in one year to the same destination.

Of the solitary arrivals, that of the *Edinburgh* galley in late August 1734 is highly significant as her direct voyage back from St. Petersburg with a cargo of hemp and lint, was in flagrant breach of the English Russia Company's monopoly of access to this port. She represents therefore the spearhead of a well orchestrated assault, led by the Edinburgh merchant William Hogg, on the English chartered companies' exclusiveness to key markets. Hogg's supporters openly rejected the English Attorney General's earlier ruling (1711) which upheld the English monopolists right to deny Scottish traders access to their preserve under Article XVIII of the Act of Union. Their challenge was first directed against the Russia Company which had earlier retorted with threats of the seizure of any Scottish vessels found at St. Petersburg and/or levying compensatory import duties at those Scottish ports found to be nurturing the breach.<sup>85</sup> The following May (1735) however the issue was resolved in the Scottish merchants' favour as Empress Anne of Russia concluded a *Treaty of Navigation and Commerce*, the thirty-two articles of which effectively threw open the Russian trade carried through St. Petersburg to all vessels of the reciprocating nations.

### **The introduction of the press-gang to Scotland after 1755**

There can be little doubt that the first three decades of the new century were a watershed in European affairs. Spain remained unappeased over Gibraltar but stopped short of declaring war in 1726. After the Treaty of Paris (1733) the Anglo-French accord was effectively dead as commercial and colonial rivalries gathered momentum.

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<sup>84</sup> *Edinburgh Evening Courant*; successive reports January 1734 - January 1735

<sup>85</sup> Macmillan, 'The 'New Men', p. 47.



As a result the peacetime establishment of the Royal Navy was enlarged in anticipation of hostilities. The first bounty system to stimulate the whaling industry, perceived as a training ground for seamen, was introduced in that year. The bounty does not appear to have generated interest in the North as earlier ventures have proved unsuccessful. In the meantime the navy required men and looked to Scotland to provide its quota despite the ruling, dating from before the Act of Union, that Scottish seamen were exempt from the press.

Prior to 1755 this understanding had been honoured by the British Admiralty but this did not stop commanders desperate for seaman taking matters into their own hands whilst in Scottish waters. In the spring and summer of 1734 the press tender to *HMS Terrible* toured vessels entering the Forth. Their first attempt at press-ganging a crew in peacetime - from the *Happy Janet* in from Rotterdam - was repulsed. Greater resolve and force was however brought to bear as the crews of the *Mary* of Bo'ness and *Tartar* of Leith were secured for the service.<sup>86</sup> On this occasions, despite an outcry, little seems to have done by the Scottish civil authorities to secure their release.

### **The Scottish experience of the first trade wars 1739-48**

The first 'trade wars' (known collectively in America as King George's War) broke out in 1739 despite Walpole's direct opposition. The initial contest, the War of Jenkin's Ear (1739-44), was a contrived affair to legitimise an assault on the Spanish colonial trade. The supposed mutilation of Captain Jenkin - master of the brig *Rebecca* of Port Glasgow - at the hands of the Spanish *Guarda Costa* in the Caribbean a few years earlier, provided a dramatic accusation of barbarism to mobilise public support for the war.

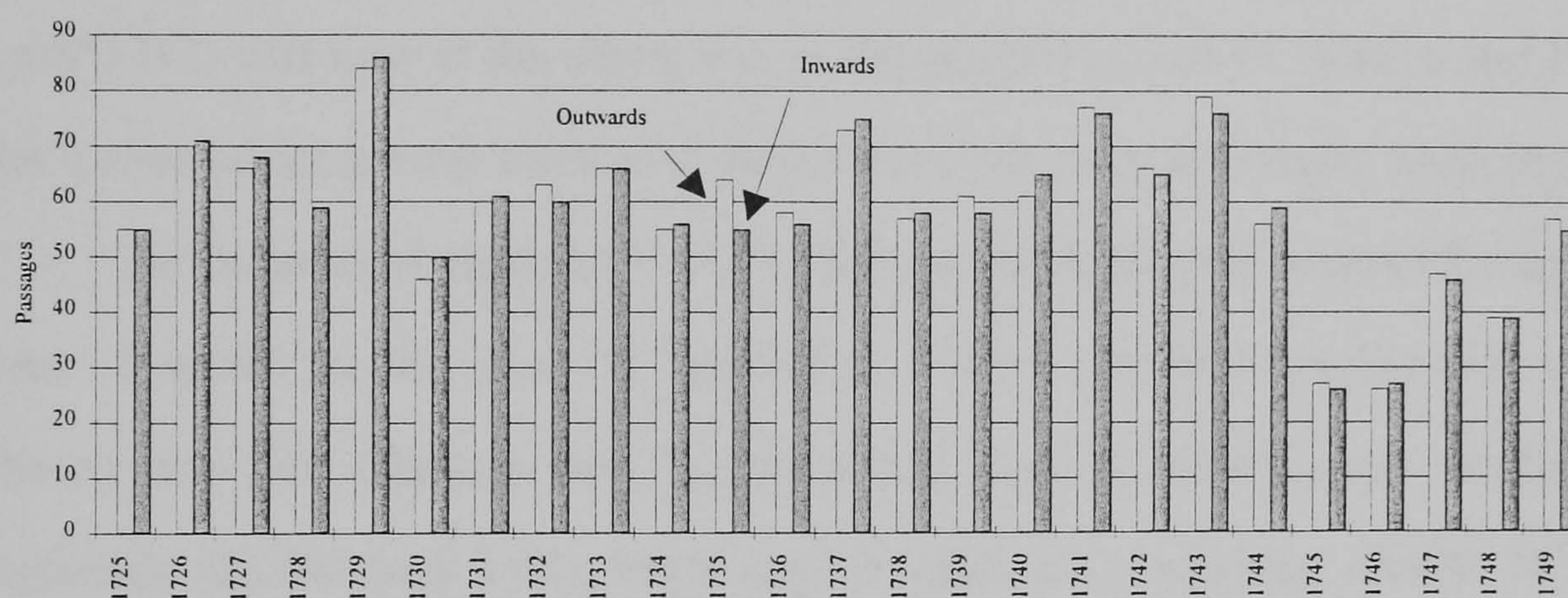
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<sup>86</sup> *Edinburgh Evening Chronicle*, 5 May, 12 June 1734 and 26 February 1735. One of their victims would appear to be David Burd who wrote his will (1734) while on board *HMS Terrible*; SRO, RH 15/54/39 .



The Spanish were not however the soft target assumed by the war party and press of the day. By February 1740 Spanish privateers were operating in the southern approaches to within forty leagues of Cork, catching the chronically run-down navy ill-prepared.<sup>87</sup> So much so that the government was forced to impose a temporary embargo on all out-going shipping in order to meet the shortfall in men for the navy.<sup>88</sup> After the embargo was lifted Leith's regular traders to southern European waters remained hard hit as all trade with Spain and the Canaries was formally suspended on 1 September 1740. That summer the threat from Spanish privateers in the southern approaches to the English Channel was such that the annual sailing of the English East Indies fleet was diverted north-about via Leith.<sup>89</sup>

Table: 5.5 The number of passages made by Scottish masters through the Sound 1725-49



Source: *Danish Sound Tolls*

The Baltic were beyond the European war zone (southern waters) and so the northern trades were virtually unaffected even though the Swedes technically joined the conflict in September and threatened to take British vessels as prize. The number of Scottish passages through the Baltic was, by and large, maintained by the protection offered by Anglo-Dutch convoys and encouraged by the continuation of the bounty on grain.

By 1741 the Clyde tobacco fleet faced the prospect of capture by Spanish privateers cruising off the Capes of Virginia and the Newfoundland banks. These

<sup>87</sup> The was only thirty-five ships-of-the-line serviceable in 1739 due to Walpole's neglect.

<sup>88</sup> The embargo was imposed by 'full order' of the Privy Council, 25 February 1739.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid, 4 August 1741.



raiders worked out from Spanish West Indies bases and their activities were largely unchecked due to the absence of an effective convoy system or naval presence in the Chesapeake region.<sup>90</sup>

In home waters however the security of the Clyde and the North Channel was unchallenged. Indeed, the *Glasgow Journal* for the three years prior to the French entry into the war (1741-3) makes no reference to any Spanish privateers or naval activity in or around Clyde area.<sup>91</sup> During those years around 400 foreign-going passages (inwards and outwards) were reported from Greenock and Port Glasgow, of which one quarter were made by vessels from the lower Clyde ports.<sup>92</sup> Overall the Clyde's shipping activity remained largely unchanged by the war, apart from the absence of sailings to Spain and the Mediterranean. The suspension of the ban on importing Irish victuals (April 1741) was now at the discretion of the Scottish Court of Session and Exchequer which allowed for greater control of the both the overseas and coastal trade in grains.<sup>93</sup>

The import and export of tobacco dominated the foreign trade of the upper Clyde ports. Imports for the year 29 September 1743-4 numbered eighty-four cargoes of tobacco into Port Glasgow and Greenock (45 and 39 respectively) totalling 22,140 hogsheads (13,647 and 8,493 hogsheads respectively) weighing almost 18.5 million pounds.<sup>94</sup> It must however be emphasised that despite this high volume of tobacco, very few vessels were actually involved in the Atlantic leg. Their numbers never exceeded twenty-six (c.5,000 tons) in any one year during this period. They were, with one exception (the *Christian* of Virginia), all owned and based at the Clyde ports. The chartered vessels from Whitehaven and Lancaster having been discarded.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> The first Scottish casualties were reported from this region in July of the following year when two Port Glasgow vessels - *America* and *Argyle* - were taken off the Capes; *ibid*, 14 and 21 July 1741.

<sup>91</sup> The only acknowledgement of the war was the departure of six transports under escort from *HMS Dolphin*; *ibid*, 1 October 1741.

<sup>92</sup> *Glasgow Journal*; successive entries August 1741 - July 1743.

<sup>93</sup> Formal notice of a suspension was displaced at the customs house Leith but for 1/- copies were made available for other ports.

<sup>94</sup> SRO, E504/ 28 and 15/ 1-2, Port Books Port Glasgow and Greenock.

<sup>95</sup> *Glasgow Journal*; successive entries August 1741 - July 1743.



Around double this number of Clyde vessels were directly involved in the European distribution of re-exported tobacco. This is not to say that they constituted a separate fleet since a substantial number of the transatlantic vessels were then being utilised on the secondary legs to the major French entrepôts. The majority of the vessels in this re-export trade were however smaller vessels (under 100 tons) at this time which were suited to the lesser ports and anchorages of the northern European market.<sup>96</sup>

By then there was already a discernible degree of geographic specialisation between the upper Clyde ports. Port Glasgow, the dominant port in the trade, looked more to the established French and Low Country markets, whereas Greenock found its niche in serving the smaller ports of Guernsey, Norway and the Baltic. As a consequence Greenock depended more heavily on the lower Clyde ports (notably Saltcoats) for the additional smaller vessels needed to serve this diverse range of markets. The *Glasgow Journal's* reports for the months of March and April often list small groups of these vessels entering Greenock in ballast, after the winter lay-up at their home port, and leaving with tobacco.<sup>97</sup>

### **The effect of the entry of France into the war 1744**

This situation at the Clyde ports dramatically changed when France joined Spain (April 1744) in what has become known as the War of Austrian Succession (1744-48). This extended conflict embroiled virtually the whole of Europe and every sea area as Britain, Holland and Austria aligned against France, Spain and Prussia. The French entry into the war had been long expected and so her Dunkirk-based privateers were quick off the mark. Within days the English Channel was untenable for unescorted

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<sup>96</sup> SRO, E504/ 15/ 1-2, Port Books Port Glasgow and Greenock.

<sup>97</sup> An example was the departure of *Providence*, *Cunningham*, *Margaret and Jean*, *Concord*, (all of Saltcoats) and *Mayflower* of Irvine for Norway; *Glasgow Journal*, 10 April 1742.



vessels and by the end of the month French privateers were roaming the North Sea, mainly off the approaches to Norway and the Dutch ports.<sup>98</sup>

The closure of French ports greatly limited the activity of those Leith merchants who had yet to establish a presence in the alternative Portuguese wine trade. Even the Clyde masters attempting the run to Lisbon or Oporto around western Ireland found the prospect of capture by St. Malo and Bayonne privateers high once they were in the vicinity of the Bay of Biscay.<sup>99</sup> In the Baltic trades, the greatly increased risk of capture halved the number of Scottish passages through the Danish Sound for the next two years.

With the approaches to the southern ports of Britain badly infested the London insurance market panicked. In May 1744 the war was formally extended to the Caribbean, as a result marine insurance quadrupled to between twelve and fifteen per cent outwards and between twenty and twenty-five per cent homewards. In September of that year a Chesapeake-bound vessel out of London was refused insurance, whilst Bristol brokers were asking up to fifty per cent of the agreed value of the hull and its cargo per passage. Their worst fears were realised in June the following year when an entire convoy of twenty-two merchantmen and its two naval escorts heading for the Chesapeake, were taken in the English Channel by the Brest fleet.<sup>100</sup>

The Clyde's wartime locational advantage for her Atlantic traders should have immediately come to the fore as Clyde vessels carrying tobacco to the French designated ports were, in theory, immune to capture under the terms of the 'contract of 1744'. This contract had been concluded between a consortium of west coast tobacco merchants and the *Les Fermiers Generaux* - the French State monopoly. A highly astute and hard-won contract that anticipated the dislocation of the French trade by war

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<sup>98</sup> The first reported losses were the sloop *John* taken into Dunkirk on her passage from Campvere to Scotland - and the *John & Christian* of Montrose taken soon afterwards while attempting a run to Rotterdam.; *ibid*, 27 April and May 1744 respectively.

<sup>99</sup> The first reported loss was the *Robert* from Greenock to Oporto; *ibid*, 19 June 1744.

<sup>100</sup> Middleton, *Tobacco Coast*, pp. 324-5.



by guaranteeing the market and offering safe passage to Clyde vessels delivering tobacco for the next six years providing they did not engage in any other trading activity with France. For reasons that are not fully understood, Clyde masters did not take up the option of acquiring a French permit under the contract during this war. In all probability they were prudently waiting to see if such guarantees of immunity to capture were respected by Spanish as well as French privateers. A more immediate reason was undoubtedly the internal chaos generated by the Forty-Five Rebellion which severely blighted two sailing seasons.

During the first difficult years of the enlarged war, the prospect of capture for those Atlantic vessels that did sail was greatest off the American coast. French privateers cruised off the Capes of Virginia from the Cape Breton ports, principally Louisbourg. Incoming vessels had no regular escort beyond Ireland and so provided easy pickings as they approached the American seaboard.<sup>101</sup> By 1745 however the privateering menace in the waters off French Acadia was greatly reduced by the daring capture of the French fortress at Louisbourg.<sup>102</sup> This did not fully check the threat as French and Spanish privateers working out of Caribbean bases were still able to reach the Capes of Virginia for the next two years. Their work was greatly aided by the erratic sailing time and wholly inadequate levels of protection afforded by the annual Chesapeake convoy, which was grossly mismanaged during this particular war.<sup>103</sup> News of the loss of Scottish vessels taken off the Capes was often late in filtering home as crews were taken back to privateer's Caribbean base.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Three Clyde vessels were taken attempting to reach the Chesapeake; *Lloyd's List*, 7 May 1744. In the same month a Saltcoats vessel was looted and sunk *en route* from Dumfries to 'Newfoundland'; *ibid*, 10 August 1744.

<sup>102</sup> This fortress was restored to the French after this war.

<sup>103</sup> Middleton, *Tobacco Coast*, p. 323.

<sup>104</sup> An example was the capture of the snow *Eliza* of Port Glasgow (60 tons) by a Spanish privateer. confirmed months later when her crew were exchanged at Jamaica; *Aberdeen Journal*, 12 April 1748.



## The disruption to the north-east ports and the counter-measures 1744-8

In home waters the north-east coast of Scotland once again bore the brunt as enemy privateers worked deep into the North Sea within weeks of the French entry into the war (April 1744). The Calais privateer the snow *Susannah*, (100 tons/ 8 carriage guns/ 18 swivels/ 210 men) led the way.

The two cruises of the *Susannah*, at the beginning and end of the war, serve to illustrate the mode of operation of an inshore-hunting privateer and the extent of the counter measures available at different stages of this conflict. She arrived off Orkney and Shetlands in May 1744, ransoming her seventh prize less than six miles off Shetland.<sup>105</sup> By July she had moved south to the Cromarty and Moray Firths where she ransomed two small Scottish coasters and was probably the unnamed privateer that took the brig *Indian Queen* of Aberdeen (80 tons) on her passage to Hamburg.<sup>106</sup> During her seven week cruise she was never challenged and by the time *HMS Aldborough* was finally sent north from Leith (September 1745) she had already slipped away.<sup>107</sup>

By way of contrast her second cruise, during the last months of the war, displays a much greater deployment of guard ships on the exposed east coast. The *Susannah* re-appeared off St Abb's Head in early February 1748, taking the *Blessing* of Aberdeen returning from Rotterdam. The French master (styling himself 'Captain Antoine L'Amie') refused to offer ransom and sent her north-about to Brest with a prize crew.<sup>108</sup> The *Susannah* then cruised north, dropping off the *Blessing's* crew at Slains before her rendezvous with another Dunkirk privateering brig off Peterhead. Their intention was to cruise the Scottish coast in company for the next five weeks sending any prizes taken to Norway to minimise the risk of re-capture. In March they appeared unopposed off Montrose, placing that whole stretch of coastline in a state of alarm. The *Susannah* then

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid, 29 May and 10 July 1744. The last prize was the *Helen & Margaret* from Norway to Inverness.

<sup>106</sup> On this occasion the brig was dispatched to Dunkirk with a prize crew; *Lloyd's List*, 17 July 1744.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid, 18 September 1744.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid, 3 February 1748.



apparently parted company with her consort and headed south sending the Forth into a state of panic. She kept well clear off and continued southwards taking two Scottish vessels off the Holy Isle and driving others ashore. Off Flamborough Head she ransomed an Aberdeen bound vessel before being taken herself by *HMS Hastings*.<sup>109</sup>

The capture of the *Susannah* was probably inevitable for she had stayed too long in Scottish waters after the alert had been gone out. On receiving the first intelligence of her presence, the Naval Commander of Scotland Commodore Laurie, sent orders north to *HMS Experiment*, then on convoy duty at Orkney, to make a sweep of the North Sea coast as far south as Leith. As a further precaution her consort, *HMS Fox*, was instructed to escort away from Scapa Floe those vessels heading for the west coast and Ireland.<sup>110</sup> One of the two Dutch warships sent to the Forth on convoy duties, under the Staple Contract with the State of Zeeland, was also detached to patrol the Moray Firth as directed by the Provost of Aberdeen.<sup>111</sup>

The scale of this hunt for the *Susannah* was however only available in the closing stages of the war. Between her two cruises the naval defence of the north east coast was piecemeal. At the time of her first cruise at least five vessels were taken by small privateers along the east coast without any response from the guard ships to the south.<sup>112</sup> In March 1745 a French privateer lay off Aberdeen harbour at its leisure seizing all fishing boats encountered and occasionally venturing into the harbour to cut out vessels at anchor. Pleas sent south for the two armed sloops at Leith - the *Hazard* and *Happy Return* - to be sent north on a cruise fell on deaf ears.<sup>113</sup> The naval commander chose instead to re-institute the convoy system which did little to prevent individual vessels being picked off on their way to the convoy rendezvous.<sup>114</sup> Between

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<sup>109</sup> *Aberdeen Journal*, 8, 23 March and 12 April 1748.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid*, 16 March 1748.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid*, 1 April 1748.

<sup>112</sup> *Lloyd's List*, April 1748 onwards.

<sup>113</sup> Clark, *Aberdeen*, p.116.

<sup>114</sup> The capture of the *Nelly* of Leith as she sailed to join convoy in the Forth by a small privateering schooner demonstrates how close inshore these raiders were prepared to work.



the passing of the convoys whole stretches of the north-east coast remained open to attack. In August 1747 two large French privateers could afford to linger for a week off Aberdeen before *HMS Mercury* arrived and chased them off.<sup>115</sup> The overall result was that the trade and shipping of the north-east ports was adversely affected by the war, which retarded the economic development of the region.

It was only in the last months of the war (January 1748 onwards) that a series of naval victories swung the balance of power at sea heavily in Britain's favour thereby releasing naval units from fleet duties to cruise the coasts and bolster the convoy system.<sup>116</sup> The immediate success of this enhanced cruiser and convoy strategy inspired one boastful contributor to the *Aberdeen Journal* to calculate that in the twelve months up to April 1748, sixty-one privateers had been taken with a further twenty-six sunk or burned, in addition to twenty-two French warships lost in fleet actions.<sup>117</sup> Whilst the war with France officially ended the following month, such self-congratulation was premature for the communities of Orkney as French privateers, 'acting under Spanish commissions', continued to raid the Scapa Floe area until the war with Spain ended (12 July).<sup>118</sup>

### **The security problem in the Chesapeake 1748**

Much more damaging to Scottish interests were the fast-sailing Spanish privateers that infested the Capes of Virginia during those final months of the war. They penetrated into the Hampton Roads which stopped all unescorted movement at the

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<sup>115</sup> The larger of the two - the *Marshal Saxe* - carried thirty-four guns; *ibid*, 24 August 1747.

<sup>116</sup> An example of this new deployment was the arrival at Leith, in January, of *HMS Launceston* (40 guns) with the Riga convoy of some twenty-six vessels. The same report mentions 'hundred vessel' Baltic and Scandinavian escorted convoys still at sea; *ibid*, 5 January 1748.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid*, 19 April 1748.

<sup>118</sup> *HMS Granada Bomb* took, whilst returning from escorting the Iceland cod fleet north of Shetland; the last raider; *ibid*, 16 August 1748.



entrance to the Chesapeake. They were only finally dislodged when *HMS Loo* used a captured privateer as a decoy to take two of their number.<sup>119</sup>

At the end of nine years of warfare the reports of the capture and re-capture of Scottish vessels in the Atlantic and Caribbean were still being received in Scotland months after all hostilities had officially ceased.<sup>120</sup> At least one Scottish company took legal action through the Spanish courts to recover or to extract compensation for their vessel taken after hostilities had ceased. A demonstration of how accepted the Law of Nations had then become.<sup>121</sup>

For a few Scottish entrepreneurs the peace came too soon. Simon Dunbar, then residing at Newport, Rhodes Island, informed his father, John Dunbar of Burgie, 'the accounts of a peace disconcert my measures a good deal as I am concerned in privateering'.<sup>122</sup> His venture was but one of thousands that had fitted out in the colonies under a Vice-Admiralty letters of marque to joined the c.1500 commissions issued to English and Irish vessels by the London Admiralty.

In direct contrast only nine Scottish traders had taken out letters during these wars.<sup>123</sup> The details of crew size and armaments given in their declarations imply that they were all Clyde tobacco traders engaged as 'running ships'.<sup>124</sup> This can be taken as indicative of the higher profit to be made in running tobacco across the Atlantic and independent of convoy. Indeed, only one letter of marque vessel - the *Lilly* of Glasgow - appears to have captured a prize; a well-laden French West Indiamen out from Havana.

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid, 10 May 1748.

<sup>120</sup> Irvine lost two vessels - the *Mayflower* and the *John & Anne* - in the last weeks, taken 200 leagues off Cape Clear by a Bayonne privateer while on route to Barbados. The *Montrose* of Glasgow was also attacked but beat off the privateer; *Glasgow Courant*, 25 July 1748.

<sup>121</sup> A case in question was the *Sally* of Port Glasgow whose owners - William Wallace & Co.- hotly contested the privateer's declared date of capture; GCA, Shawfield MSS B10/12/1

<sup>122</sup> SRO, Ross of Pitcalnie MSS GD 199/99.

<sup>123</sup> PRO HCA 26.

<sup>124</sup> Running ships characteristically carried a larger than peacetime crew for its own defence and smart handling but of insufficient size to provide prize crews.



Such was the Frenchman's value (£7,000) that her captor chose to escorted her back to Port Glasgow, arriving June 1744, rather than risk delivery to a prize crew.<sup>125</sup>

With the return to peace the Spanish trade was quickly resumed. By 1750 the Iberian trade of Leith had fully recovered, along with the sugar trade from the West Indies. Around this time Thomas Douglas and Company of Montrose chartered four snows - *St. George*, *Neptune*, *Montrose* and *Potomac Merchant* - for slaving expeditions to West Africa and on to the West Indies and the Chesapeake.<sup>126</sup> Only the *Potomac Merchant* is known to have made the circuit successfully.<sup>127</sup> It is interesting that her out-going trade goods had to be acquired in Holland and that she carried slaves to the Chesapeake; the latter being a destination that is rarely recorded in this terrible trade. The rumblings of yet another war, in 1754, probably killed off this highly dangerous enterprise out of Montrose.

### **The impact of the Forty-Five Rebellion**

By then British internal political conditions had irreversibly changed. Embedded in the previous nine years of general warfare was the second great Jacobite Rebellion (1745-6). As in the earlier uprising, the British navy held mastery of the seas around Scotland. The first incident at sea was the celebrated engagement off the Lizard between *HMS Lyon* and the French frigate *Elizabeth* (60 guns). Although the accompanying privateer *Du Teillay*, with the 'Young Pretender' onboard, escaped north, the loss of the *Elizabeth* denied the prince his principal supply of arms. More

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<sup>125</sup> The prize - the *Happy Lady* of La Rochelle - was retained by her new owners, granted her own letters of marque and sent out to Virginia as *Lily's Prize* in the tobacco trade; *Lloyd's List* 29 June 1744 and PRO, HCA 26, letter 28 January 1744.

<sup>126</sup> D. G. Adams, 'Trade in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries' in G. Jackson and S.G.E. Lythe (eds), *The Port of Montrose* (Tayport, 1993), p. 126.

<sup>127</sup> In September 1752 a Glasgow merchant's report (to the *Aberdeen Journal*) that 'we have advice that one of the Montrose Guineamen is arrived in the Potomac River, Virginia, consigned to Mr. William Black. The sale of Negro at £32 and for women £30 sterling..'. By Christmas of the year she was back safely in Montrose with 118 elephants tusks on top of barrel staves and hoops.



importantly, he lost the psychological advantage of a French warship in Scottish waters to encourage waiverers to his cause.<sup>128</sup>

The Young Pretender had embarked on his mission with only promises of Swedish intervention and French naval support. The first never materialised whilst the only French naval unit of consequence to enter Scottish waters was the frigate *Le Fine* (32 guns) which landed Lord Drummond's regiment at Montrose harbour. There she was almost captured by *HMS Milford* (40 guns) which had the misfortune to run aground on Annat bank long enough for the Frenchman to escape taking with her the armed sloop *HMS Hazard*.<sup>129</sup>

On the west coast the sea ports in the Firth of Clyde held out for the Hanoverian cause. The mounted detachment of Jacobites sent west after their entry into Glasgow was quickly turned back by cannon fire from a line of British warships moored along the estuary - from the Greenock to above Port Glasgow.<sup>130</sup> The dislocation of sea-borne trade was however almost total as shipping activity on the west coast came to a virtual standstill until the Jacobite host marched south. In November 1745 a morbid Provost Cochrane of Glasgow wrote to his associate Patrick Crawford:

Our case in this place and country is deplorable. For eight weeks there has been no business, our customhouse is shut up, though we have 4,000 hogsheads lying in the river undischarged, our manufacture at a stand for want of sales and money, no payments of any kind, no execution, our country robbed, plundered and harrassed by partys.<sup>131</sup>

His observations were borne out by the nil return for duty paid on imported tobacco recorded by the Collector of Port Glasgow and Greenock for the trading year 1745-6

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<sup>128</sup> A further shipment of arms, conveyed by Sir John Hall on an unnamed French vessel, was taken by a Bristol privateer; SRO, GD 206 Hall of Douglas MSS 2/289.

<sup>129</sup> D. G. Adams, 'Defence of the Harbour' in G. Jackson and S.G.E. Lythe (Eds.), *The Port of Montrose* (Tayport, 1993), pp.78-9. The *Hazard* had been captured by local Jacobites and renamed the *Prince Charles*.

<sup>130</sup> Weir, *Greenock*, p.38.

<sup>131</sup> J. Dennistoun (ed.), *Cochrane Consep*(Glasgow, Maitland Club, 1836), p. 31.



Table: 5.5 Vessels entering the upper Clyde from the Chesapeake 1742-50

Year	1742	1743	1744	1745	1746	1747	1748	1749	1750
Voyages	9	18	11	0	3	36	44	49	45
Vessels	9	18	11	0	3	32	42	41	41
Incidents of double passages	0	0	0	0	0	4	2	8	4

Source: Port Books of Port Glasgow and Greenock; SRO, E. 504/28/1-5 and 15/1-15 (Dell)

and the absence of any incoming vessels from the Chesapeake during the rebellion. The re-export trade in tobacco from the Clyde was however quickly resumed as soon as the Jacobites started their long retreat up the east coast. The upper Clyde ports customs records for the same year listed 135 out-going voyages carrying tobacco to fourteen European ports.<sup>132</sup> This could only have been effected by heavy de-stocking of hogsheads held ashore or onboard in laid-up vessels.

As the Jacobite army marched north, after its last victory at the Battle of Falkirk, elements of the Royal Navy outflanked them. *HMS Glasgow* arrived in the Cromarty Firth (January 1746) to support the isolated and hard-pressed Government troops under Lord Loudon. In the days leading up to the final reckoning at Culloden Moor, she was joined by three shallow draft sloops - *Shark*, *Vulture* and *Speedwell* - detached from Byng's flotilla of eleven warships in the Forth to help evacuate the loyalist following from Inverness. On arrival they were deployed to blockade the Moray and Cromarty Firths and intercepted three French merchantmen attempting to carry arms, men and intelligence to the Jacobites.<sup>133</sup>

In the aftermath of the Jacobite defeat at Culloden (April 1746), naval units patrolled both coastlines of Scotland whilst the prince remained a fugitive at large. *HMS Glasgow* remained on the north-east coast station until September whilst a naval flotilla - *Raven*, *Baltimore*, *Trial*, *Furnace* and *Trident* - patrolled the west coast and isles. Their oppressive presence was more than sufficient to thwart the two rescue

<sup>132</sup> William King (Principal Collector) *Tobacco Duties 1729-49*, table dated 13 February 1749-50. I am grateful to R.F. Dell for access to this contemporary printed source.

<sup>133</sup> M. Ash, *This Noble Harbour* (Edinburgh, 1991), pp. 176-7.



expeditions fitted-out from the neutral Swedish ports of Gothenburg and Uddevalla.<sup>134</sup> They also enforced the government embargo on the sailing of all herring boats beyond August 1746, which particularly hit Campbeltown.<sup>135</sup>

After that date the west coast ports were re-opened to incoming foreign trade as evident in the resurgence of the tobacco trade in the following table. The east coast ports recovery would seem to have sluggish by comparison. The number of passages made by Scottish domiciled masters in the Baltic trade (most from the east coast) had halved during the emergency and took five years to recover the 1744 level of activity.<sup>136</sup>

### **The maritime implications of post-rebellion government legislation**

The principal legacy of the rebellion on Scottish maritime affairs was its impact on the central government's attitude to North Britain. After Cumberland's bloody retribution had run its course on the rebellious clans, government policies turned to the long-term pacification of the highland areas by means other than military occupation. The old policy of isolating and containing the Jacobite areas north of the Great Glen was abandoned. In its place was the drive to rehabilitate and integrate the north-west, both politically and economically, into the rest of North Britain.

The first moves were, understandably, motivated by the security needs. As part of the dismantling of the feudal military service a new Disarming Act (1746) was rigorously enforced which left the coastal population at the mercy of every armed long-boat party sent ashore in future wars. The raising of Fort George (commenced 1747) to command the narrow entrance to the Moray Firth guaranteed the security of the town of Inverness and ensured military access to the Great Glen. Thereafter, this major

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<sup>134</sup> G. Behre, 'Two Swedish expeditions to rescue Prince Charles', *Scottish Historical Review* (1980), LIX, 2, pp. 140-153.

<sup>135</sup> A.R. Bigwood, 'The Campbeltown Buss Fishery 1750-1800' (unpublished M.Litt dissertation, Aberdeen University, 1987), p. 8.

<sup>136</sup> See table: 5.3



fortification offered protection from seaborne raiders to vessels frequenting the Cromarty and Moray Firths in wartime. Around the same time the Admiralty finally funded the charting of the western isles and highlands that would greatly reduce the navy's dependence on local men as pilots.

The curbing of the unacceptable levels of lawlessness and disaffection in the Scottish coastal communities, by enforcing the writ of central government, was high on the agenda. A succession of legislative measures followed that sought to empower the preventive officers holding the Treasury's warrant at each Scottish head port and out-station against the smuggler. In the months that followed Culloden, the personnel of both the Customs and Excise services were again purged of Jacobite sympathisers.<sup>137</sup> Thereafter, preferment in recruitment was given to ex-soldiers who had served with regiments on the government side. This was especially the case in those customs precincts in Jacobite areas, such as Campbeltown, where the service was expected to provide intelligence on and detain fugitives.

### **The Tobacco Act of 1751**

From the Clyde shippers' point of view the most influential legislation of this period was the Tobacco Act of 1751. This laid down stricter rules to curtail the much denounced abuses and frauds perpetuated at the quay side. During the parliamentary debate considerable public discussion had focused on an alternative scheme that proposed the creation of a separate certification system for tobacco traded through ports north of the Carlisle-Newcastle line.<sup>138</sup> This proposal recognised that the rise of the Clyde ports in the re-export trade in tobacco had been underpinned by widespread evasion of import duty. The solution was therefore to dispense with the payment of

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<sup>137</sup> As late as 1751 the whereabouts of Captain Hay - the commander of the customs sloop *Princess Ann* - at the time of the rebellion was investigated after he failed to raise his flag or firing a salute on the King's birthday; GCA, CE 82/1, Collector of Campbeltown to the Board, 21 October and 19 November 1751.

<sup>138</sup> *Glasgow Journal*, 20 May 1751.



domestic duty on incoming hogsheads destined for the Continent and so deny the fraudulent dealer the option of claiming draw-back on what was later illegally re-landed. Without a bonded warehouse system in place this proposal was discarded as unworkable.

The 1751 Act concentrated therefore on tackling sharp practice within the existing draw-back system. The Act introduced new procedures and stringent rules based on the London practice for the weighing, marking and releasing of hogsheads by Customs. One major fraudulent practice was stopped immediately - the claiming draw-back of duty on tobacco deemed to be unsellable due to damage but, in fact, sold into the domestic market. After 1751 draw-back was only recoverable on tobacco given up to the customs officers of the port for disposal. The burning of this tobacco had to be independently witnessed and residual ash weighed to prevent collusion.

In the same year the export bounty on grains was enhanced by halving the weight of ground wheat or oatmeal (to 224 lb) as the unit that attracted payment. Malt for brewing was also added to the export bounty list at this time.<sup>139</sup>

### **The moves to curb smuggling**

Furthermore, to deny the small smuggling wherry the pretence of legitimate trade in tobacco, all vessels conveying tobacco overseas or coastwise had now to measure seventy tons or over. Further legislation passed at this time required surety for any vessel under one hundred tons voyaging to the colonies. The 'hovering' clause, first introduced in George I's time to stop smugglers choosing their moment to land goods, was extended to four leagues off the coast on all vessels carrying an array of enumerated goods - mainly, tobacco, tea, coffee and spirits. The transportation of brandy (later also

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<sup>139</sup> Payment was out of customs revenue failing which a certificate of debenture was issued bearing interest until redeemed.



applied to rum) had now to be in sixty gallon casks if found onboard a vessel anchored within two leagues of the shore; or four leagues if transferring goods at sea.<sup>140</sup>

Such stringent measures had the negative effect of consolidating 'the trade' in the hands of a network of well-armed smuggling gangs operating out from the islands off the west coast or running directly onto the east coast from the Continent. The Isle of Man, whose fiscal rights belonged to the Duke of Atholl, rose to pre-eminence as the storehouse of commodities smuggled into Scotland during this period. The 'petty sovereignty' of the island was a matter of public concern. In May 1751 the *Gentleman's Magazine* published an article entitled *Reasons for the annexing of the Isle of Man to the Crown of Great Britain* which outlined the vast compendium of goods that regularly left this island for Ireland and the British mainland despite the presence of customs cruisers in the Irish Sea and North Channel.<sup>141</sup>

### **Government promotion of the fisheries**

Two years earlier the public debate had, yet again, turned to a closely related issue; the active promotion of the fisheries as the alternative employment to smuggling within the Scottish maritime communities. This panacea for Scotland's economic and social ailments was the cherished project of the *Mare Clausum* school of British mercantilism but it had consistently failed to take root.

During Queen Anne's time the monopoly company model of development was abandoned in favour of competing patented companies encouraged by a bounty payment on every 'last' of herring exported. This system was the outcome of a rationalisation of the hotchpotch of English legislation concerning herring fishing undertaken in 1704. Under Article XV of the Act of Union this concept of direct subsidies was extended to

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<sup>140</sup> This Act, passed in June 1736, allowed a small anker (barrel) for the use of the crew.

<sup>141</sup> As quoted by F. Wilkins, *The Isle of Man Smuggling History* (Blakedown, 1992), preface.



Scotland. The first subsidy was in the form of a bounty of £10-4/- on every 'last' of herring exported.

After the Union the only British rival to the Dutch and Danes companies in the off-shore grand fisheries was a London-financed 'Orkney and Shetland Fishing Company'. This company existed for a short time around 1713 under the management of Christopher Jackson and Thomas Brown but seems to have achieved little. In 1719 an Act of Parliament set aside £20,000 from the Scottish Customs revenue to promote any Scottish company that would engage in the fisheries (or manufacture).<sup>142</sup> This coincided with the signing of a convention with Hamburg which allowed for the first time British caught and barrelled herring to be imported at the same rate charged on Dutch imports. The only takers were another 'Orkney Company' formed the following year by 121 'gentlemen and merchants' mainly from Southwold (Norfolk). This company remained exclusively an English venture until it crashed in 1772. At the height of the speculation mania in the 1720s its shares commanded a price of £25 which encouraged other English-based flotations - Cawood's 'North Sea Company' and the 'British Fisheries Company'.<sup>143</sup>

Scottish enterprise and capital was also drawn in by this wave of speculation and opportunism. In 1722 the 'Co-partners of the Fisheries established by the Royal Burrows' held their first annual general meeting in Edinburgh to report on the progress of the deputation sent to London to secure a patent at a cost of £2,000.<sup>144</sup> Like the English schemes this too fell victim to the general aversion to joint-stock ventures in the aftermath of the 'South Sea Bubble' scandal. In 1726 the Convention of Royal Burghs was relieved of their immediate control of the Scottish fisheries and it passed to the 'Commissioners and Trustees for Improving Fisherys and Manufacturers in Scotland'. The new body appears to have been the first to introduce the new concept of 'premium'

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<sup>142</sup> *Act of Parliament*, 5 Geo. I c.20. The year before the bounty had been raised slightly to little effect.

<sup>143</sup> The original capital target was £500,000 at 3% interest ; J. Dyson, *Business in Great Waters* (London, 1977), p. 56.

<sup>144</sup> *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, 2 March 1722.



payments to encourage those fitting out for the herring fisheries. The sum of £2,650 was set aside to reward the earliest arrivals or best performers in a targeted sector of the fisheries or manufacture.<sup>145</sup>

Nature also conspired against the promotion of grand fishery schemes. During the early 1730s great shoals of herring appeared in the Firth of Clyde and off Londonderry.<sup>146</sup> These inshore shoals could be readily caught and delivered to the quays of the Clyde ports by the indigenous four to six-handed open boats, known as 'cobles'. There was therefore little incentive to invest local capital in building and outfitting an expensive decked 'buss' for the more dangerous off-shore fisheries.

In 1749 the King's speech to Parliament recommended new efforts be made to establish the fisheries. By the following year a committee oversaw the creation of the London-based 'Society of the Free British Fishery'. By Act of Parliament this Society was authorised to raise £200,000 by the issue of half a million shares of which £100,000 was allowed to be spent during the first eighteen months. As a result the Society built, at great expense, four busses copied from the lines of a Dutch buss hired for the purpose. The first two busses - the *Pelham* and the *Cartaret* - were launched in time to sail for Bressay Sound in June 1750 to claim the new thirty shilling bounty, guarded by the armed sloop *Spy* to 'answer insults'. Their entire mode of operations, with its elaborate system of managers, superintendents and on-shore stations, proved ruinously expensive. By the time the society went bankrupt in 1753, they had only managed to outfit eight busses (819 tons) in total claiming a total bounty of £1,228-10/-.<sup>147</sup>

In that year however the first Campbeltown buss - the *Farquharson* (48 tons) - was launched.<sup>148</sup> Nature again dealt a blow to the growth of the indigenous buss industry with the re-appearance of great shoals of herring in and around the Firth of

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<sup>145</sup> Macpherson, *Commerce*, III, p. 159.

<sup>146</sup> Bigwood, *Campbeltown buss*, p. 13.

<sup>147</sup> Dyson, *Great Waters*, p. 56. The other two - the *Argyle* and *Chesterfield* - were launch in July at Southampton. Dutch busses (60- 150 tons) were specifically designed for over-the-side fishing with a low freeboard and rollers to manage the nets. Their typical buss was a round-sterned two-masted doggar with leeboards.

<sup>148</sup> Bigwood, *Campbeltown buss*, p. 17.



Clyde during the first half of the decade which diverted all local interest towards inshore fishing from cobbles centred on Campbeltown. Indeed, by 1755 only one Scottish buss (77 tons) claimed the bounty whilst the number of barrels of herring exported from Campbeltown alone leapt from 6,933 to 24,436.<sup>149</sup> This situation prompted the government to change tactics to recruit local entrepreneurs to the buss industry.

### **The whaling industry**

The number of Scottish-owned engaged vessels in Greenland whaling followed a similar pattern. Earlier joint-stock ventures, in the 1680s and 1720s, had been short lived and incurred heavy losses.<sup>150</sup> Thereafter, the initial capital outlay required proved as prohibitive as the shortage of local mariners skilled in the art of whaling. It was therefore not until 1750 when the whaling tonnage bounty was doubled from the original 1733 rate of twenty shillings per ton to forty shillings per ton, that the industry was finally established in the North.<sup>151</sup> The departure of the *Tryall* (333 tons) of the recently formed 'Edinburgh Whale Fishery Company' for the Spitzsbergen and Greenland hunting grounds in 1750 opened this new era in Scotland's long involvement in northern whaling.

By then the British mercantilist system had reached its most complex state. Although there would be future adaptations to the existing tariff and regulatory structure, the introduction of bounty and premium payments raised the final tier in the protective wall built around the home shipping industry.

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<sup>149</sup> J.Knox, *View of the British Empire*, Vol. II as quoted by Bigwood, *Campbeltown busses*, table. 2a.

<sup>150</sup> In 1686 the *Dragon* of Queensferry returned with the master and four seamen from the *Jean* of Leith lost off Greenland, *RPC*, XII, p. 482.

<sup>151</sup> Analysis of the progress of the early Scottish bounty whaling industry is available in; G. Jackson. 'Government Bounties and the Establishment of the Scottish Whaling Trade', in J. Butt and J.T. Ward (eds), *Scottish Themes* (Edinburgh, 1976), pp. 46-66.



## CHAPTER VI: SCOTTISH TRADERS IN WAR AND PEACE 1756-75

The period 1756-75 was the high period in British mercantilism. Abroad the aggressive and expansionist trade policies instigated in the late 1730s reached a climax with a new trade war with France and her allies. The territorial gains from which consolidated Britain's first great overseas trading empire. In home waters the policy of exclusion of rivals in the fisheries was actively promoted by the bounty system. In doing so the administrative system developed to oversee and enforce the myriad of prohibitive legislation, tariffs, bounties and premiums - from the working practices at the head port to the production of annual national accounts at Edinburgh - reached their most complex state.

Furthermore, by the mid 1750s, Scotland's internal political conditions were, for once, stable. Jacobitism was a spent force and the administration, sitting in London, was actively seeking ways to promote the stability and prosperity of North Britain.

### **The first phase of the Seven Years War 1756-60**

The Scottish maritime experience of the Seven Years War (1756-63) falls into two distinct phases divided by the great security scares in northern waters during the winter of 1759-60. The war had long been expected and hence safeguards to protect the shipping stock had been in hand for sometime. A full year before the formal declaration of hostilities, the Dutch escort warship *Hopende* arrived in Leith Roads with sixty-four Jutland whalers to collect the waiting Scottish contingent. The four Bo'ness whalers that joined those from Leith and Dunbar at the rendezvous were described as 'ready for war'.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Edinburgh Chronicle*, 17 and 31 March 1755.



By the following sailing season an Order in Council (2 March 1756) imposed an immediate embargo on vessels leaving Scottish harbours, as a prelude to declaring formal hostilities. This was to allow the Navy Board to procure the necessary transports to prosecute the war in America and the West Indies. In the Clyde this decree was widely ignored by the long-haul masters who gambled that the embargo would be withdrawn and forgotten by the time they returned.<sup>2</sup> Their guess was correct as this embargo was, to all intents and purposes, defunct by the time war was formally declared (18 May).

For the next three years the Clyde traders enjoyed relatively unfettered access to the Atlantic via the North Channel as the St. Malo and Bayonne privateers were effectively restricted to the waters immediately south of Ireland by the presence of convoy escorts and the guard ships at Kinsale; together with a deluge of small English privateers in the English Channel.<sup>3</sup> This was in direct contrast to the experience of the Bristol masters who suffered high losses running the gauntlet of the first wave of enemy privateers that infested St. George's and English Channels. Their alternative was long delays in port awaiting a naval escorted convoy.<sup>4</sup>

The Scottish masters trading across the North Sea were also well protected at the start of the conflict as eight Royal Naval sloops were allocated to cruise the North Sea. They also maintained, along with their Dutch counterparts, a regular convoy system out of Leith to Russia, Scandinavia and the Baltic.<sup>5</sup> With such a naval screen in position the Admiralty deemed it sufficient to only re-institute the Forth-Thames leg of the

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<sup>2</sup> The 'regular' transatlantic master William Semple, set the example in the first week of the embargo by clearing out of Greenock in the *Cochrane* (240 tons) for the Isle of May (Cape Verde Isles) in the face of ignoring dire warnings from the local customs officers; GCA, CE 60 1/1, Collector of Port Glasgow and Greenock to Board, 13 March 1756.

<sup>3</sup> To curb their excesses the 'rule of 1756' was introduced which placed a lower limit of one hundred ton burthen on British privateers. This restriction was not, however, implemented until 1758.

<sup>4</sup> Felix Farley's *Bristol Journal* reported that 113 Atlantic traders from that port were taken during the Seven Years War;

<sup>5</sup> St. Malo was greater than Dunkirk as a centre for privateers during this war.



northern coastal convoy system.<sup>6</sup> This deployment of naval power did little however to re-assure the north-east ports which were left unprotected, between convoys, from the cut-and-run raids by small French privateers slipping across from the Norwegian coast. The disruption caused by such infestations was generally disproportionate to the size of the threat. In April 1757 the town council of Peterhead was compelled to write to the Convention of Royal Burghs asking for naval protection after a small enemy privateer had brought all ship movements and fishing to a halt along their stretch of the coast.<sup>7</sup> The temporary solution to this recurring problem was to contract the Aberdeen whaler *St. Anne* as a guard ship for the north-eastern seaboard. She was a fast New England-built 'frigate' hull pierced to carry twenty cannon and hence well suited for her new role. After fitted out at Leith with ordnance and stores she sailed in company with the captured French privateer *La Fortune*, which served as a decoy. Their only report of a successful capture was that of a Boulogne dogger found hovering off Aberdeen Bay.<sup>8</sup>

### **Thurot's raids into northern waters**

The cruises into Scottish waters of the great French privateering Commodore Thurot were raids of quite a different magnitude. In many ways his method of waging war was the model for others that would follow as he was intent on creating wide-spread disruption to the local commerce and coastal communities. He had first established his reputation as a skilful and dogged opponent with a highly successful cruise of the Irish coast and North Sea in 1757-8 in the ex-naval frigate *Marechal de Belleisle* (44 guns/500 men).<sup>9</sup> During that time he took over seventy prizes and survived two engagements

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<sup>6</sup> The arrival and departure of the Leith - Newcastle - London convoy was regularly reported, e.g. *Edinburgh Chronicle*, 23 February 1760.

<sup>7</sup> Buchan, *Peterhead*, p. 27.

<sup>8</sup> V.E. Clark, *Aberdeen* (Aberdeen, 1893), pp. 81 and 119. They had the benefit of the French private codes found on the *La Fortune*; B. Lubbock, *The Arctic Whalers* (Glasgow, 1937), p. 90.

<sup>9</sup> Thurot's intimate knowledge of the Irish and Scottish coasts, together with his sworn intent to do harm to the Irish customs service, gave rise to speculation in the contemporary newspapers that he was either the Scottish



with British frigates. His last skirmish (26 May) was off Red Head, south of Montrose, where he received a four-hour mauling from *HMS Dolphin* and *Solebay*. He escaped by virtue of the superior sailing qualities of his frigate in light airs.<sup>10</sup>

Thurot's hallmark was to do the unexpected. He did not wait for his protagonists to re-appear after their re-fit at Leith but crossed instead to the North Sea to join up with two other French privateers at the entrance to the Kattegat. During July this flotilla took eleven British ships off Gothenburg, one of which was almost certainly the *Lothian* of Leith *en route* to St. Petersburg for hemp for the newly opened Edinburgh Roperie Company.<sup>11</sup> Thurot then re-appeared off Liverpool in early September spreading consternation and paralysing shipping movements in the Irish Sea and St. George's Channel before he went north-about to Bergen with his prizes. By the end of November he re-appeared off the Scottish east coast and took four prizes off St Abb's Head.<sup>12</sup> After this success he was commissioned as an officer of the French navy.

Thurot's second cruise (October 1759 - February 1760) took on the proportions of an major invasion force. His mission was to avenge the destruction of Cherbourg whilst creating a diversion that would allow the Brest fleet to break out to join those squadrons gathering to convey the Duc d'Aiguillon's invasion army across to England from Brittany. Thurot's original orders were to land troops on the west coast of Ireland or the Clyde before rounding Scotland to pick up a further company of soldiers waiting at Ostend to support the grand invasion. His squadron comprised three heavily-armed frigates and two corvettes, led by the *Marechal de Belleisle* (now described as 44 guns/545 men). Reported onboard were 1,300 soldiers, under the separate command of a

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renegade 'John Brand' or an Irish smuggler. Lubbock states that this frigate was built at a cost of £20,000 to the owner, rumoured to be Madame de Pompadour, and fitted out at the expense of her ladies at court. *Ibid*, pp. 95-6.

<sup>10</sup> Captain Marlow of the *Dolphin* described Thurot's frigate as 'the finest ship I ever saw swim on the water'; *Aberdeen Journal*, 6 June 1758. I am indebted to Michael Dun for calling my attention to this incident.

<sup>11</sup> A.J. Durie, 'Gentlemen pretty much strangers to the Baltic trade: the Edinburgh Roperie and the Sailcloth Company 1750-1802', *Scottish Industrial History*, XIV-XV, p. 29.

<sup>12</sup> One of his last prizes, a Scottish snow taken off Whitby laden with flax, hemp and iron, was recaptured and taken into Scarborough. His cruise end with his return to Ostend in early December 1758; Lubbock, *Arctic Whalers*, pp. 95-8.



military army officer, and a cache of 'musquets' to arm any local Jacobite support encountered.<sup>13</sup>

Thurot's lengthy preparations at Dunkirk were widely reported by the Scottish lowland newspapers of the day. Fully alarmed the Scottish Royal Burghs petitioned the Admiralty for warships to protect their coasts and for a stand of 200 muskets to be allocated to each port to arm a local militia.<sup>14</sup> On receiving the news of Thurot's sailing (30 September) the military in the Forth area was put on alert and additional munitions were hurriedly brought up from London to Leith and Aberdeen. At the same time Fort George was again garrisoned and supplied by a convoy of six or seven transports which also delivered cannon for transit to Fort William.<sup>15</sup> Commodore Boyes' squadron, which had been blockading Dunkirk since August, was also dispatched to the protect the North. To ensure their safe navigation of Scottish waters eight Leith pilots were hurriedly dispatched to Eyemouth to rendezvous with him.<sup>16</sup>

Thurot's mission was plagued by internal divisions and an acute shortage of provisions and experienced seamen. Even before the squadron sailed the plan had already been substantially altered. Thurot now sought to cut up the Muscovy and Baltic convoys from Norwegian bases before heading north-about to raid north-west Britain. His opportunity came when Boyes was blown off station, allowing him to slip out of Dunkirk and run north to Gothenburg to provision. Once there however he received 'no succour' as the local Swedish authorities were determined not to incur British hostility by anything that might be construed as a 'national act' of support. Weeks of inactivity followed during which time Thurot was reported as 'impatient to put to sea to execute his enterprise, which is certainly designed against the coasts of Scotland.'<sup>17</sup> When, in

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<sup>13</sup> An eye-witness reported that her armament had been greatly increased. Her original four pounders were now replaced with thirty x eighteen pounders on the main deck, twelve x twenty-four pounders on the lower deck and six x six pounders on the quarter deck; *Edinburgh Chronicle*, 6 September 1759.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, 9 August 1759.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, 4 September 1759.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, 22 October 1759.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, 28 November 1759 quoting a London received letter from Stockholm of dated 6 November 1759.



November, the squadron finally sailed for Bergen, the sailing season was all but gone. Caught off the Norwegian coast in heavy weather he lost the frigate *Began* (40 guns) with 600 men onboard.<sup>18</sup>

### **The defence of the Scottish coast from Thurot's seaborne invasion**

During that month the French grand invasion scheme became completely unravelled. Admiral Hawke's desperate gamble in Quiberon Bay succeeded in decimating the combined Brest and Martinique squadrons under Admiral de Conflan before they could reach the transports at Morbihan. With the southern flank now secure, British naval forces gathered off the north east coast of Scotland (December 1759) in expectation of Thurot's next move. The main squadron under Boyes lay in wait off Peterhead while Captain Carkette on *HMS Hussar* cruised further north between Orkney and Aberdeen. His orders were to rendezvous with the sloop-of-war *Dispatch*, acting as escort to the returning Iceland fishing fleet. In the immediate vicinity was *HMS Surprise* at Stromness and *HMS Rye* in the Moray Firth, the latter convoying arms and baggage for Lord Sutherland's regiment then mustering at Inverness. The coastal defences relied on bluff as the local off-shore fishing boats were primed to say, if boarded and questioned, that Aberdeen had been well fortified and supplied with ample munitions.<sup>19</sup> The Leith-London convoy escorts were also strengthened with the arrival of *HMS Portmahon* to join *HMS Prince Edward* (40 guns). They replaced the lightly armed sloop of war *Swan* which was re-assigned to escort the Hudson Bay fleet as far north as the Shetlands.<sup>20</sup>

While the north-east braced itself, Thurot crossed the North Sea in late December rounding the Faroes in the face of bad weather to avoid detection or

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18 Ibid, 28 February 1760.

19 Clark, *Aberdeen*, p. 120.

20 *Edinburgh Chronicle*, 28 April, 28 June and 7 July 1759.



entanglement with Boyes' squadron. In doing so he regained the initiative to attack the undefended west coast where only the lightly armed customs yacht *Prince of Wales* was regularly on station.<sup>21</sup> By February Thurot had reached Islay where the *Belleisle* was careened to caulk her leaking hull and take on some provisions for his starving crews. After leaving Lochindaal the squadron made for the entrance to Lough Foyle where they intended to make a landing at Londonderry. This scheme was thwarted by a storm which carried them across the North Channel and into Scottish waters.<sup>22</sup>

The first news to reach Edinburgh of his presence in the Firth of Clyde were sightings from the village of Ballantrae on the Carrick shore of south Ayrshire. Their reports of gunfire off Ailsa Craig bore witness to his first action in Scottish waters when he took the incoming *Ingram* of Port Glasgow. Thurot's privateering instincts apparently got the better of him as he put onboard a prize crew for a north-about passage to Bergen, despite his dire shortage of able seaman.<sup>23</sup> He was equally foolhardy in setting ablaze a smaller coaster which he caught in the same area heading for Belfast after looting her of fifty hogsheads of sugar and ten hogsheads of tobacco.<sup>24</sup>

The tell-tale pall of smoke on the horizon galvanised the unprotected Clyde coast ports into a frenzy of activity to meet the expected invasion. All sailings were immediately suspended while a wherry, hired by the Greenock magistrates, was sent out into the North Channel to ascertain his exact whereabouts. At the same time seven hundred regular soldiers and five hundred men from the Argyllshire militia were hurriedly moved from their quarters at Glasgow to Greenock to repel landings.<sup>25</sup> Under the command of Colonel Parr they were immediately set to constructing a cannon emplacement at the end of the old ropework quay at Greenock to deny the enemy access

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 2 August 1759. The *Ingram* (200 tons) was a relatively new plantation-built hull carrying wine and salt on the final leg of a triangle voyage from the Clyde - Newfoundland - Lisbon for John Glassford, John Munro & Company.

<sup>22</sup> J.R.H. Greeves, 'Captain Thurot's Expedition', *Dumfriesshire and Galloway Natural History and Antiquarian Society* (1961), XXXVII, pp. 147-156.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 3 March 1760 confirmed her capture near Ailsa and dispatch to Bergen.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 26 February 1760.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 5 March 1760.



to the port and the estuary beyond. The Clyde lighthouse trustees bore the cost of the materials to build the 'Beauclerk battery' (£100) and the purchase of twelve cannon (£828) from the newly opened Carron Ironworks.<sup>26</sup>

As it transpired Thurot had already taken the fateful decision to land his troops at Carrickfergus. Six hundred French troops secured the town while he attempted to re-victual by looting the immediate area and issuing threatening demands for provisions to the Belfast authorities. The landing proved to be a fiasco as squabbling factions within his own military command frustrated his plan to march on Belfast.<sup>27</sup> In addition the French prisoners of war he hoped to release in the area had earlier been marched off into the countryside by the large number of militia gathering to expel him. Consequently he re-embarked his troops with the intention of making a new landing at Whitehaven or Liverpool.

Once out into the Irish Sea however his squadron was brought to action by the three British men-of-war sent up from Kinsale to intercept him. A strong nor'westerly denied him an escape route through the North Channel. The ensuing engagement off the Galloway coast was witnessed by the incoming Virginiaman - the *Cumberland* of Port Glasgow. In Captain Crawford's report he described how Thurot in the *La Marechal de Belleisle* and the transports had been abandoned by his two frigate escorts - *Le Blonde* and *Le Terpsichore*. The bloody engagement with *HMS Aeolus*, Captain Elliot, lasted just over half an hour and left the French flagship a shattered hulk with 160 dead onboard, including Thurot.<sup>28</sup> The two escaping French frigates were soon caught in Kirkcudbright Bay by *HMS Pallas* and *Brilliant* and, along with the transports,

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<sup>26</sup> G. Blake, *Clyde Lighthouses* (Glasgow, 1950), p. 13. The Glasgow historian Eyre-Todd has the American John Paul Jones sailing in company with Thurot in 1759; G. Eyre-Todd, *History of Glasgow* (Glasgow, 1931), III, p. 290.

<sup>27</sup> *Edinburgh Chronicle*, 1 March 1760.

<sup>28</sup> Thurot's body, in a silk shroud, was later washed on the Kirkcudbrightshire coat.



carried into Ramsay Bay on the Isle of Man.<sup>29</sup> Thurot's prize crew on the *Ingram* fared no better and were captured after wrecking their charge on the west coast of Scotland.<sup>30</sup>

### **The impact of Thurot's penetration of the North Channel and Irish Sea**

Encouraged by Thurot's cruises and the absence of the Kinsale guard ships during the emergency, the bolder French privateers cruised deeper into the Irish sea and off the Atlantic coast of northern Ireland that winter. The Irvine merchant Robert Arthur had the gross misfortune to have four vessels in which he held an interest ransomed in Irish waters in the space of six months.<sup>31</sup> Arthur's experience does not seem to have been an isolated event as the Glasgow marine insurance market remained jittery, even though the raiders appeared to be moving further north, for the remainder of the Spring. In June, insurance rates on local voyages to and from the Clyde again soared for a few weeks when two raiders re-appeared in the North Channel. This panic aided to the general alarm created by the number of reports in the *Lloyd's List* of Scottish vessels captured in West Indian waters. Insurance for the North Sea traders fared little better as the Edinburgh and London underwriters reacted to the report of a number of enemy privateers off the north east and Norwegian coasts at this time.<sup>32</sup>

The scare was however short-lived and largely over by July. With the west coast clear again, Arthur was able to secure a two per cent discount from his Edinburgh insurers of the *Katty* for her direct passage to New York; provided she used the North Channel and did not touch Cape Breton.<sup>33</sup> On the east coast, security had been

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 8 March 1760, reprinting the *Belfast Newsletter* of the week before.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 2 April 1760, report of eight French crewmen under escort from Duart Castle to Edinburgh.

<sup>31</sup> The largest was the *Kingston* of Greenock was taken just a few days out from Stranraer *en route* to Virginia by the *Chevalier Barte* of Bayonne. He adds that the insurance rate between Greenock and Cork was 'extremely high' owing to the presence of two enemy privateers in the North Channel; [C]arnegie [L]ibrary (Ayr), Robert Arthur Letterbook, 8 May 1760.

<sup>32</sup> One vessel reported was Arthur's *Peggy and Nelly* taken into Martinique; *Lloyd's List*, 7 July 1760. Arthur used the captain's report to contest the legality of the capture through his London insurer John Buchanan.

<sup>33</sup> Arthur was quoted £300 on the hull and £100 on the cargo; CL, Robert Arthur Letterbook, 10 June 1760.



improving since April when *HMS Tartar* was sent out from the Forth to clear out a few small privateers reported off Stonehaven. She was later joined on the east coast by *HMS Cumberland* and *Prince Edward*, a force sufficient to deter any raider on that stretch of seaboard. At the same time *HMS Solebay* was assigned to escort the annual sailing of the Dutch and east coast whalers gathered at Leith.<sup>34</sup> Despite this greater naval presence, minor raids by small privateers continued to occur off Aberdeen and Orkney causing disturbance to local shipping for weeks at a time during that summer.

The tide however had turned against the French privateers in Scottish waters with the capture of two of the larger raiders by the escort ships. *HMS Solebay* took the *Chevalier Barte* after a thirty-six hour chase from the Forth to the Tyne, while in Orcadian waters the veteran Captain Allen on *HMS Grampus* took the most persistent North Sea raider - the Dunkirker *Duc d'Aumont* (12 guns).<sup>35</sup> The only major breach, in what was otherwise an effective security screen, was the appearance off St. Abb's Head of two French privateers during the spring of 1761. They succeeded in ransoming three Leith vessels before being chased off.<sup>36</sup>

### **The loss of seamen to the press-gangs**

Perhaps more damaging to the general level of shipping activity in Scottish ports in the early years of the war was the loss of seamen to the pressgang tenders which toured the Firths of Clyde and Forth and Aberdeen harbour. In November 1755 the Scots immunity to the press was set aside by Admiralty order and the local mayors and magistrates were commanded to aid the press-gangs in their area. Within days, the tender to *HMS Glencairn* was stationed at Gourock to apprehend 'straggling seamen' for

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<sup>34</sup> *Edinburgh Chronicle*, successive reports during that month.

<sup>35</sup> In that engagement four of the privateer's crew were killed and the remaining one hundred survivors taken as prisoners and landed at Kirkwall and Aberdeen; Lubbock, *Arctic Whalers*, pp. 89 and 91.

<sup>36</sup> Grant, *Edinburgh*, III, p. 280.



the navy.<sup>37</sup> At first the exemption of certain categories of seamen from the press was respected, namely; the captain, first mate, surgeon, carpenter, harpooners, line coilers, boy apprentices, customs officers and their boatmen. By 1757 however these exemptions were being ignored by commanders desperate for men.<sup>38</sup>

As the war at sea reached its climax in 1759 only twenty-one out of forty-one of the Navy's ships-of-the-line properly were manned, consequently the general press was re-introduced and all pretences of selection were discarded. Farm labourers were seized by a particularly 'hot' press whilst working the fields in the immediate hinterland of the Clyde ports, which caused many to abscond to the hills.<sup>39</sup> In June alone some fifty men had been taken off out-going vessels from Greenock and Port Glasgow irrespective of their professions. By the following month two press tenders moved down channel to work in unison off the tip of the Mull of Kintyre where they stopped all passing vessels to take off four or five men from each.

The degree of force needed to secure their quota reflects on the determination of the average seamen to escape the horrors of life below decks on a British man-of-war at this time. During a scuffle on board the *Grizy*, then in the Clyde, one seaman was shot dead while another was wounded.<sup>40</sup> Casualties were taken on both sides as a later report from Stranraer noted; 'on Wednesday night last a tender endeavoured to board the *Rappahannock*, in order to impress her hands, but the crew standing to their defence, several shots were fired from both ships by which the master of the tender and one of

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<sup>37</sup> GCA ,CE 60/1/1 Collector of Port Glasgow and Greenock to Board, 11 November 1755. The previous year a Scottish Admiralty Judge had imprisoned Captain Palliser of *HMS Seahorse*, for five weeks for contempt after he ignored a Scottish warrant to release of an apprentice pressed from the *Cumberland* of Thurso while in Leith Roads; Grant, *Edinburgh*, III, p. 277.

<sup>38</sup> An example was the seizure of a boatmen from customs *Cumbrae* wherry which delivering dispatches to the sloop-of-war *HMS Porcupine* cruising off Tory Island. GCA, CE 60/1/1 Collector of Port Glasgow and Greenock to Board, 29 November 1757.

<sup>39</sup> *Selections from the Judicial Records of Renfrewshire* (Paisley, 1876) as quoted by M.K. Barritt, 'The Navy and the Clyde in the American War 1775-1783, *Mariner's Mirror* (1969), LV, p. 37.

<sup>40</sup> *Edinburgh Chronicle*, 28 June, 12 July and 16 August 1759.



the *Rap's* people were killed.'<sup>41</sup> Afterwards one hundred pressed men were crammed on board the tender *Alexander and Anne* for a fateful passage to Plymouth.<sup>42</sup>

The hot press continued unabated well into the following spring creating a dire shortage of seamen. Robert Arthur had the greatest difficulty in finding a crew for the large ship *Greenock* (400 tons), which he had recently careened at Crawsfordsdyke, as 'hands are so scarce there was no getting hands to engage.... We have not, in fact, been able to get six able seamen engaged. I have now people out throu all the country looking for men ... as to carry her off by the next spring tide.'<sup>43</sup> A skeleton crew was normally granted exemption from the press by a 'certificate of protection' given to the master but Arthur's attempts to secure 'special protection' for the larger crew he needed for a proposed transatlantic passage proved futile. A few weeks later however his extensive local network mustered the twenty men allowed under the 'normal protection'. They sailed her down to the Fairlie Patch anchorage where more hands were waiting to slip aboard for her voyage to Quebec via Cork. The effect of the press-gangs and wartime demands elsewhere was to push up seamen's wages. Arthur stated that wages were already up to £3 per month by the time the *Greenock* sailed.

In the Forth, the press was equally harsh and the departure of vessels at Leith was delayed for up to two months for want of men. Attempts by the tenders to board the out-going armed whalers invariably met with stout resistance.<sup>44</sup> Aberdeen's seafaring community appears to have suffered the highest attrition rate, mainly due to the zealousness of Lieutenant Hay, commander of the press tender to *HMS Eagle*. In fifteen months (1756-7) he sent south seven hundred pressed seaman, despite direct Admiralty orders to suspend his activities. With his departure Aberdeen enjoyed a short respite before the new Admiralty order (1759) re-instated the press whereupon the

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41 Ibid, 2 May 1760.

42 The tender, under the command of Lieutenant Gentile, called in at Carrickfergus *en route* and was captured by Thurot; *ibid.*, 23 and 25 February 1760.

43 CL, Robert Arthur letterbook, correspondence to Coutts and Bros, London, 26 April and 19 May 1760. Wages would appear to have been just above the £2 mark before war and pressgangs took their effect.

44 *Edinburgh Chronicle*, 4 and 9 August 1759.



tender to the *HMS Hussar* arrived in Aberdeen Bay. The town baillies went as far as to wine and dine Captain Carkette in the hope that he might exchange the recently pressed local whaling-men for felons held in the town jail.<sup>45</sup> Fortunately, as the war at sea began to wind down after 1760 so did the activities of the press-gang tenders.

### **The security factor in the growth of the transatlantic tobacco trade**

The number of incoming vessels carrying tobacco to the Clyde from the Chesapeake was highly sensitive to the state of security.<sup>46</sup> During the first year of the war (1756), when the sailing embargo compounded the initial shock of war, the number of incoming vessels fell to thirty-three. So much so that the Glasgow merchant John Buchanan led a deputation of tobacco merchants who successfully appealed to Pitt to reinstitute the Chesapeake convoy system.<sup>47</sup> With this in place and the Clyde's own security was found to be intact, the number of incoming vessels soared to eighty (1758). However, as the uncertainty surrounding Thurot's invasion (1759) mounted so this number cut to back forty-four. The following year, when security was regained on all fronts, the number of voyages leap to ninety-seven. Thereafter, the general trend in the number of incoming vessels carrying Chesapeake tobacco was upwards for the remainder of the 'tobacco era'.

The triumph of the Glasgow Tobacco Lords in securing their dominant position within the British Empire for the tobacco import and re-export trade after 1760 has, rightly, claimed the attention of economic historians on both sides of the Atlantic.<sup>48</sup> The elaborate credit and store system, with the establishment of resident factors along the

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<sup>45</sup> Clark, *Aberdeen*, pp. 118-9. At first the local authorities had co-operated with the press-gang to round up 'dissolute' seaman. In 1756 the *Aberdeen Journal* reported a combined operation with the local military, executed 'with great secrecy, vigilance and activity', which sealed off all streets leading away from the port. This operation netted some 100 men of whom around forty were held for the press, including ; nineteen whaler men, a local pilot, cooper and shipwright's apprentice.

<sup>46</sup> See following Table: 6.1.

<sup>47</sup> Crowhurst, *Defence of British Trade*, p. 154. Escorts only operated one hundred leagues off-shore.

<sup>48</sup> To the fore are the studies undertaken by Professors Devine and Price and henceforth referred to.



shores of the rivers and creeks of the Chesapeake, guaranteed full return cargoes for the arriving Clyde vessels and superior market intelligence.

Dell's analysis of the operational aspects of the Clyde tobacco fleets has, in turn, highlighted the crucial role of transport in their business calculations. He attributed the 'clockwork' management of the Glasgow-owned company vessels as the major operational efficiency that allowed shorter turn-round times and hence a steady increase in utilisation rate.<sup>49</sup>

The volume of tobacco did fluctuate greatly however with the variances of the weather in the growing regions which determined the supply that could be delivered to the Clyde by the following spring. During the early war years the crop yields were highly erratic: 1756 was a short crop followed by a bumper harvest; then two more poor harvests in succession (1758 down by one quarter and 1759 down one eighth on normal levels). The Tobacco Lords, with their warehoused stock, were able to exploit the supply situation to ride out both the security and credit crises of 1760-1. Indeed, their domination was secured immediately after the war when demand and hence prices for tobacco dropped on the Continent squeezing out the smaller merchants.

### **The effect of administrative changes on the tobacco re-export trade**

Raising the legal size of hull permitted to carry tobacco to France (1760) to 100 tons was a further blow to the continuing presence of the smaller estuary ports in the trade.<sup>50</sup> A number of the vessels under this size from the lower Clyde ports did however continue to serve in the distribution of the smaller consignments of tobacco to other ports of call, notably in northern Europe and Ireland. Collection of the cargo was however almost exclusively from Greenock and Port Glasgow. As a consequence the

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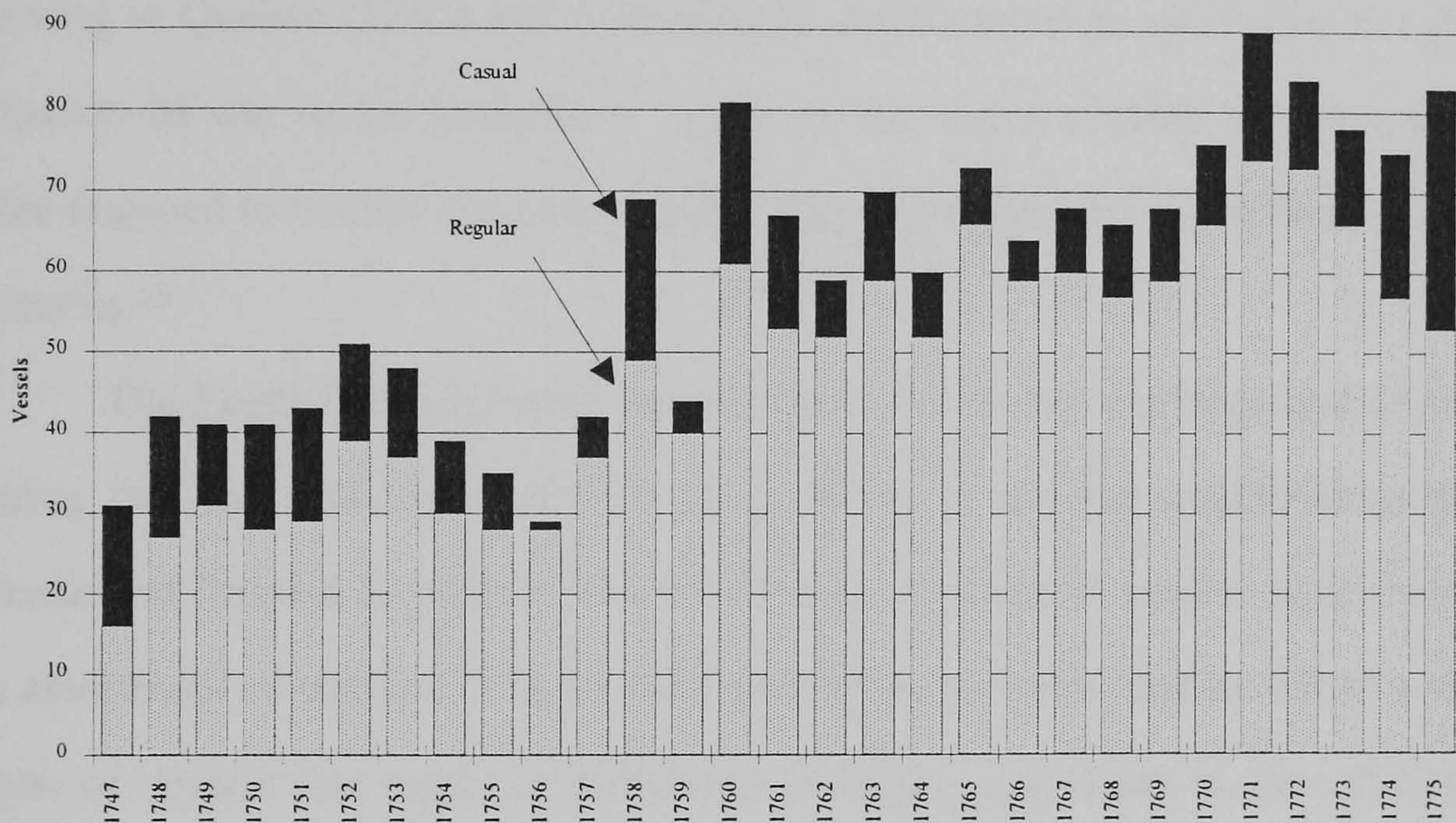
<sup>49</sup> Dell, 'Clyde tobacco fleets' pp. 1-15.

<sup>50</sup> The lowest tonnage limit was first set by the 1751 Tobacco Act at 70 tons to exclude smugglers. The rule used 'tonnage measured' as opposed to 'tons burthen', see Appendix A for explanation.



smaller 'casual' vessels and merchants from the lower Clyde ports gradually withdrew from carrying tobacco across the Atlantic on their own account. This eventually led to the loss of their status as nominated entrepôts in this commodity.<sup>51</sup> By the mid-1760s, trading in tobacco was consolidated in the hands of the great merchant partnerships of Glasgow whose 'regular' vessels run the Atlantic leg from Port Glasgow and Greenock to pre-arranged schedules.<sup>52</sup> It was not until the early 1770s, when tobacco was being stockpiled in expectation of the rupture with the American

Table: 6.1 Regular and casual vessels importing tobacco through the upper Clyde ports 1747-75



Source: SRO E. 504/ 28 and 15/ 3-25, Port books of Port Glasgow and Greenock

colonies, that the Glasgow merchants again resorted to the employment of a substantial number of 'casual' vessels to supplement their own tobacco fleets.

### The windfalls of the Seven Years War for the Scottish marine

There were however alternative business opportunities created by the war which were exploited by large and small merchant alike. From 1756 onwards the Victualling

<sup>51</sup> By 1789 only Greenock, Port Glasgow and Leith remained listed as legal entrepôts in the tobacco trade.

<sup>52</sup> Devine has sampled the 'shipping plans' of William Cunninghame & Co.; T.M. Devine, *Tobacco Lords* (Edinburgh, 1975).



Board commissioned local merchants to set up stores of provisions for the navy and the army contracted transports that visited the major Scottish ports. An strict embargo was immediately placed on the export of victuals.<sup>53</sup>

The Navy Board also needed to find vessels to supply General Amhurst's forces in Newfoundland. At least two vessels from the Clyde tobacco fleet were contracted for a short time before they were released from government service after the fall of Quebec.<sup>54</sup> Arthur's charge - the *Greenock* - was more fortunate probably owing to her great size (400 tons). She was taken into government service within two days of arriving at Quebec (1760) and immediately employed as a cartel-ship to carry French prisoners-of-war to La Rochelle.<sup>55</sup> Later in the war a number of east coast shippers were engaged to convey the newly-raised Scottish regiments to the Nore for passage to America.<sup>56</sup>

The Scottish owners were not content to be on the receiving end of privateering during this war and took out forty-seven letter of marque commissions against the French and Spanish marines.<sup>57</sup> The twenty-nine individual vessels commissioned were an assortment of whalers, Virginiamen and West Indiamen and so afford a view of the types of vessels that made up Scotland's foreign-going fleets in the official series of annual shipping returns.<sup>58</sup> Only the Dundee whaler *Grand Tully* displayed the level of manning characteristic of a determined privateer. This alternative deployment of a whaler at the start of a war was a fairly common occurrence as such vessels were both

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<sup>53</sup> The embargo came into effect in December 1756 and was renewed yearly until March 1759. The penalties were: fines of 20/- per bushel of cargo; the forfeiture of the vessel; and three months imprisonment, without bail, for the offending master; Act 30 Geo.II, c.1. Thereafter coastally conveyed cargoes of grain required a 'coast cocquet' on departure from customs.

<sup>54</sup> The *Argyle* (199 tons) and the *Mally* (180 tons) both of Port Glasgow; *Edinburgh Chronicle*, 7 January 1760.

<sup>55</sup> The Admiralty accepted her tonnage as 450 tons for hiring purpose at a rate of thirteen shillings per ton (see Appendix A); CL, Robert Arthur MSS, letter from Captain Thomas Lang to Robert Arthur, 6 December 1760. A prisoner cartel involved the exchange of matched prisoners (by rank etc.) on parole not to take up arms.

<sup>56</sup> Five transports were reported gathered at Leith; *Edinburgh Chronicle*, 14 April 1760.

<sup>57</sup> Letters against the Spanish commissions were issued after January 1762.

<sup>58</sup> Appendix C. Table: 6.3 gives full listing.



well built and designed to be armed with cannon.<sup>59</sup> It was usually a one-off speculative venture tempted by the prospect of the first windfalls of a new war. The prime targets were rival whalers and lightly armed incoming long-haul merchantmen rounding Scotland to avoid the risk of capture in the English Channel. In the case of the *Grand Tully* she does not appear to have been successful in her new role and returned to whaling for the 1759 season.<sup>60</sup>

The remainder of the letter of marque vessels were armed running ships, a speciality afforded the Scots traders in wartime by their northern location. As in the previous war once clear of the American coast, these running ships invariably left the slow-moving Chesapeake convoy to reach the market first. The Clyde letter of marque vessels were therefore (with one exception) tobacco traders in the 120-250 ton range.<sup>61</sup> They accounted for around two-thirds of the regular transatlantic fleet during the early years of the war.

Of the five Leith vessels, four belonged to William Alexander, Provost of Edinburgh, and were well-armed West Indiamen which ran north-about from their home port.<sup>62</sup> Caribbean waters were highly dangerous and so their defences were often tested, as demonstrated by the voyage of the *Edinburgh* (eighteen four-pounders, plus swivels) in the summer of 1760. She was engaged off Barbados by a large French privateer 'full of men' and exchanged shot for 'five glasses' during the chase. Such reports testify to the resolve of Scottish masters not to surrender without giving a good account of themselves, especially where the difference in fire-power with their pursuers was relatively small. An example was the *Edinburgh's* captain who, having almost

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<sup>59</sup> Lubbock, *Arctic Whalers*, p. 100; he reports that the Liverpool whaler *Leviathan*, turned privateer, rescued the *Wolfe* of Leith (for Newfoundland with baled goods) from the clutches of the *Malice* privateer of Boulogne and carried her into Stromness (1761).

<sup>60</sup> *Edinburgh Chronicle*, 9 August 1759. She was not a very successful whaler catching only one large whale (producing 46 butts) in that season.

<sup>61</sup> The exception was the *Mars* of Port Glasgow which advertised for emigrating tradesmen and goods for St. Christopher (December 1759). She was 'well fortified' for her run from Greenock with fourteen carriage guns, two of which were multi-barrelled 'organ guns' (used at close quarters); *Edinburgh Chronicle*, 26 December 1759.

<sup>62</sup> The *Little William* was armed with six and four pounders and was described as suitable for either the America or the West Indies trades when put up for sale; *ibid*, 27 February 1760.



exhausted his powder and shot standing-off a French privateer 'full of men', deployed the high-risk strategy of shutting his gun ports to tempt his pursuer to close for boarding. Once along-side he gave the privateer his last full broadside, forcing her to sheer off.<sup>63</sup> Such masters were invariably well rewarded by their grateful insurers and owners. In the latter's view the risks and high rates of insurance incurred by running were readily justified by the profits to be made from landing high-value cargoes ahead of convoys.

### **The changes to commodity trading brought about by the Seven Years War**

After the Thurot scare the widely held apprehensions over the war were quickly dispelled by a series of spectacular victories abroad that had profound implications for the access of Scottish traders to new markets. Typical of this root and branch conversion to the benefits of aggression was the Convention of Royal Burghs open letter of gratitude to the dying King George II sent in July 1760.<sup>64</sup> In this address were listed the military successes in the West Indies and Canada, culminating in the capture of Quebec, the key to which was the crushing naval defeats suffered by the French fleets in Quiberon Bay and off Cape Lagos.<sup>65</sup>

The opportunities to trade in colonial commodities were thereafter greatly enhanced, especially as Holland remained neutral during this war. Greater access, security and the high war-time prices commanded by such commodities as colonial grown grain, rice, molasses, rum, sugar and indigo attracted Scottish merchants to speculate on round-about trading, particularly in the Caribbean. The addition of the

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<sup>63</sup> The *Edinburgh* eventually made the safety of Barbados with her wounded and re-fitted for the voyage home; Grant, *Edinburgh*, III, p. 279.

<sup>64</sup> H. & J. Pillan & Wilson (eds.) *Extracts from Records of the Convention of Royal Burghs 1759-79* (Edinburgh, 1918), p. vi.

<sup>65</sup> As early as October 1759, the Edinburgh publishers Gavin Hamilton and John Balfour of the Exchange, were selling maps of Guadeloupe, Louisburg, Quebec and Montreal - as well as coastal charts of France - printed by J. Jeffrey of Charing Cross, London; advertisement *Edinburgh Chronicle*, 15 October 1759.



'ceded isles' - Grenada, Tobago, Dominica and St.Vincent - as new legitimate destinations for Scottish exports (primarily salted herrings, textiles and household goods) fuelled this interest. Even Guadaloupe, restored to the French crown after the war, remained within this network as contact with local agents was maintained unofficially.

Caribbean rum rapidly displaced Spanish brandy on the home (legally and illegally landed) market. Boosting this trade were the large quantities required by the local agents for the Victualling Office of the armed forces. Robert Arthur's accounts make it quite clear that, after 1760, rum was his prime target. So much so that he ordered his masters to avail themselves of any opportunity to freight between the islands and the American mainland if rum was not immediately available at the right price and quality.<sup>66</sup>

The direct import of indigo, an essential dyestuff, was a new venture created by the war. Previously, small amounts (chests) of West Indian indigo had been imported via France.<sup>67</sup> In 1751 a premium of six pence per pound was introduced on British plantation-grown indigo produced in South or North Carolina. It was not until August 1756 however, when the French supply was cut off, that the first directly imported cargo (1440 pounds) of South Carolinian indigo was landed at Port Glasgow on board the *Rebecca*. The bewildered Collector wrote to Edinburgh for advice on how best to verify the quality against the French benchmark before paying the premium.<sup>68</sup> Almost a year later he was still haggling with the owners when a second delivery arrived on the *Glassford*.<sup>69</sup> The inspection and premium issues were resolved soon after, allowing the trade through the Clyde ports to become well established.

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<sup>66</sup> CL, Robert Arthur letterbooks, series of correspondence to his masters.

<sup>67</sup> This source of blue dye was in demand from the growing textile industries.

<sup>68</sup> On the account of John Glassford, John Stevenson and William Laird; GCA, CE 60/ 1/ 1 , Collector at Port Glasgow and Greenock to Edinburgh, 14 August 1756.

<sup>69</sup> Matters were exasperated by the fact that the *Glassford* was a French prize, condemned at the Vice-Admiralty Court in America, and carried no evidence of her hull being re-registered or of duty having been paid on the foreign canvas of her sails; *ibid*, 4 June and 4 August 1757.



The conveyance of colonial grown rice was another commodity in which Scottish participation was stirred by the dramatic improvement in security after the victories of 1760. Prior to the war the government had encouraged an export trade in rice grown in South Carolina and Georgia. This was done by exempting rice destined for the European markets south of Cape Finisterre from British duty and waiving the Navigation Act requirement to clear through a British port.<sup>70</sup> The only requirement to engage in this trade, other than registration as a British vessel, was the acquisition of a 'rice certificate' issued at Charleston or Edinburgh via the local head port Collector.<sup>71</sup>

Vessels carrying colonial rice for the northern European markets came under the terms of the Navigation Acts and during the war years often called at Orkney, the first convenient nominated British customs precinct *en route*, to fulfil their legal requirements. The anchorage of Stromness provided the quickest (less than five days) clearance time. Such was the passing trade that, in the absence of a 'legal quay', an old large moored hulk was utilised to facilitate unloading and weighing of hogsheads in transit. Such was the spin-off in victualling and repair from the passing traffic for the local economy that the town of Kirkwall acquired their own hulk to get in on the trade.

Most of this trade was however lost after the peace as traders in rice, as well as tobacco and sugar, switched to Cowes (Isle of Wight) as the port of convenient *en route* to Holland and the Low Countries.<sup>72</sup> Kirkwall was however granted part-compensation in the unique right to export 'big' barley, duty free, as horse-feed to Portugal.<sup>73</sup> This was at a time when the other Scottish ports had to bear with the re-introduction of the seasonal embargoes on the exporting of victuals for most of the 1766-75 period.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>70</sup>, By statute renewed every seven years since 1730.

<sup>71</sup> In 1759 a rice licence cost five shillings, a Mediterranean pass £1-15/6; and a plantation certificate 5/6. The vessel's register had to be produced on application. Only the small amount of rice shipped directly to Scotland for the home market was recorded in the official Scottish 'ballance of trade'.

<sup>72</sup> The last two rice traders to pass through Orkney was in 1771; *OSA*, Parishes of Sandwick and Stromness, XVI, p. 440.

<sup>73</sup> The yearly amount was limited to 5,000 quarters; Act. 9 Geo. III, c.61.

<sup>74</sup> By 1774 the embargo was extended to peas[e], beans and malt.



## The Canadian trades

Undoubtedly some of the greatest new long-term opportunities for Scottish shippers resulted from the conquest of Canada. Dried British Newfoundland fish had always been deemed a free good under the Navigation Acts but safe access had previously been limited whilst the French threatened the fishing stations from the fortress of Louisburg on Cape Breton. Likewise, their control of the Gulf of St. Lawrence curtailed general trading with the interior.

The Treaty of Fountainebleau (1763) ceded Canada to Britain unifying the eastern seaboard market of North America for the round-about trader. Imaginative moves were immediately made to placate and assimilate Canada into the British mercantilist system. In the first year of peace (January 1764) Quebec was granted free access to cargoes originating from any port in Europe provided it was carried in a British hull. This presented the Scottish merchants with the solution to the eternal problem of finding a saleable cargo on the westerly transatlantic leg by carrying the much preferred French 'clean' salt direct to the Newfoundland fisheries.<sup>75</sup> On the returning easterly run, Canadian timber joined the list of paying cargoes, encouraged by a premium designed to ease the chronic shortage in shipbuilding materials created by the war.<sup>76</sup>

For Scotland's middle-ranking merchants, many based at a lesser port and owning ocean-going vessels under the legal threshold for carrying tobacco, these commodities provided good cargoes when round-about trading between the colonies and the Iberian market.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Scottish salt was boiled from sea water on which ox-blood was poured which removed the scum when congealed. Salt made in this way tainted fish while English rock salt discoloured fish.

<sup>76</sup> The bounty was 20/- per ton on Canadian fir timber ; CL Robert Arthur letterbook, note to Robert Findlay, Glasgow, 17 October 1764.

<sup>77</sup> A glimpse of some of these owners and their trading interests is available in fragmentary victualling bills for 1760 and the *Lloyd's Register* for 1764 - the earliest complete register to survive. The latter lists some 140 vessels with a Scottish connection.



## The customs shipping returns as an economic indicator

The shipping owned by the Scottish ports was closely monitored by the Inspector-General of Customs at Edinburgh after 1758.<sup>78</sup> The intention was to compensate for the short-comings of *official value* trade statistics by using the changes in the numbers and tonnage of vessels owned as a non-monetarised indicator of business confidence and general prosperity. Henceforth, every local Collector was required to extract from his port books a yearly return of the total number of vessels, their tonnage and crews owned by the ports within his precinct under the headings - foreign-going, coastal and fisheries.<sup>79</sup>

Their returns reveal that the actively employed tonnage owned by the Scottish ports had doubled over the 1759-75 period.<sup>80</sup> This had been achieved by a steady increase, in both the number and tonnage of Scottish owned vessels, from 1760 onwards. A further indication of improved security during the last three years of the war was the virtually unchanging tons-to-man utilisation rates, which usually dip during the war years as more crew are required for defensive capability.

That the manning ratio did not improve during the peace time years (1763-75) can be taken as indicative of the lack of incentive to be competitive as a merchant marine whilst mercantilism protected British trade from rivals. Likewise, the average hull size barely increased mainly owing to the depth limits of the harbours and creeks frequented - both at home and abroad.

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<sup>78</sup> This new appointment followed the reinstatement Scottish Customs Board (1755).

<sup>79</sup> A worked example is available in E.J. Graham, *The Port of Ayr 1727-80* (Ayrshire Archaeological and Natural History Society, 1995), Monograph 15, pp. 28-29.

<sup>80</sup> Appendix C. Table: 6.4 .



## A comparison of the Scottish fleet of 1759 with that of 1712

The ongoing shift in the concentration of the Scottish fleet from the east to west coasts becomes apparent when the 1759 shipping returns are compared with the last survey of the nation's fleets catalogued by the 1725 Review.<sup>81</sup> Despite an overall increase of almost a quarter in national tonnage since 1712, the tonnage owned by the ports of the Firth of Forth had shrunk by a third while that of the Firth of Clyde ports had nearly tripled. The Galloway and Solway Firth area, previously the least developed of the lowland coast line, experienced the highest increase in their shipping stock as Portpatrick, Dumfries and Stranraer benefited from the rising Irish cattle and passenger trades. Similar increases were also experienced by those precincts involved in the bounty fisheries, the coal trades or serving a large agricultural hinterland.

The other notable shift was in the numbers and tonnage allocated to the components of the Scottish fleet - foreign-going, coastal and fisheries.<sup>82</sup> In both counts the fisheries out-stripped the advances made by the other two categories. The expansion of the labour-intensive herring buss industry accounted for most of the increase in numbers which, in turn, had the effect of lowering the tons-to-man ratio in the fisheries category. By comparison the ratio in both the foreign-going and coastal categories crept very slowly upwards.

### The fisheries

The fisheries schemes were the prime instruments for promoting the mercantilist doctrine of exclusion. Consequently, it was the most regulated of all the maritime

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<sup>81</sup> Appendix C. Table: 6.5.

<sup>82</sup> These were crude divisions based on use of vessel whereby a transatlantic 200 tons Virginiaman is placed with a forty ton Irish-bound collier under 'foreign-going'; and a 300 ton whaler with a twenty tons herring buss under 'fisheries'. Even so the general increases in number and tonnage in all sectors over this period is incontestable: Appendix C. Table: 6.6.



activities and received the full attention of the statistical compilers and commentators. In customs returns the fisheries category refers to two distinct groups receiving a subsidy - Greenland whalers (harpoon) and herring busses (nets).<sup>83</sup> Not included were the small inshore open boats that caught white fish (ling, cod and haddock) by 'hook, line and sinker'.

### **The impact of the bounty schemes and war on the whaling industry 1750-1775**

The primary aims of government intervention were to substitute imports of essential whale oil and bone for a domestic supply and to displace rival whalers. Their promoters also claimed that, in doing so, it created a prime reserve of seamen and vessels for the Royal Navy.<sup>84</sup> Such was the importance of the Greenland whalers that they received a naval escort to and from the hunting grounds off Spitzbergen and the Greenland ice-shelf in wartime.

Government intervention took the form of a bounty system paid on whaling vessels on and above 200 tons, not the catch, so as to guarantee a return to the investors.<sup>85</sup> After 1750, when the bounty was raised to forty shillings per ton, this incentive finally established the Greenland whaling industry in Scotland. In the space of only two years, ten whalers were fitted-out from the Scottish ports. Thereafter, the annual number of Scottish whalers was sustained at between fourteen and sixteen for the next ten years.<sup>86</sup> Small though this fleet was (not exceeding c.5,000 tons) it consisted of the largest vessels then in Scottish ownership and represented the prime assets of the few successful Scottish joint-stock companies of this time (with the notable exception of the Carron Ironworks and the Banks). Jackson has emphasised the acceptance of the

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<sup>83</sup> Appendix C. Table: 6.7 The data does not match that of the 'fisheries' category of the annual customs shipping returns due to the deployment of many of the herring busses in the coastal trade in the same year.

<sup>84</sup> This claim ignores the fact that the skilled crew of a whaler were exempt from the press.

<sup>85</sup> The whaling bounty was paid only on vessels between 200 and 400 tons - 'measured' as per the tonnage formula of 1720, Vessels exceeding this ceiling received the maximum permissible bounty; i.e. on 400 tons..

<sup>86</sup> Appendix C. Table: 6.8 lists the Scottish whalers of this period.



limited liability concept within Scots law as a major factor in encouraging a cross-section of Scottish society to invest in whaling ventures.

Despite the high bounty, the west coast companies did not stay long in the industry. Their lack of business acumen compounded by the isolated location of their ports from the onshore boiling houses and convoy escorts would appear to have been the primary reasons for their withdrawal. The mis-management of the bounty claim for two Campbeltown whalers - *Argyle* (443 tons) and *Campbeltown* (299 tons) - illustrates the problem. Both these whalers returned safely from their first year's season in the Arctic (1751) having caught three whales between them. Their owners however made fundamental errors in their affidavits and securities presented to the Receiver General of Customs and the bounty payment was consequently withheld. It was only reinstated after a delay of more than a year by a direct appeal to the Treasury.<sup>87</sup> In the interim the owners had put both vessels up for sale (November 1751). These vessels were subsequently acquired by the Edinburgh Whale Fishery Company and relocated at Leith in time for the following season.

As the Seven Years War loomed, the two remaining whalers on the west coast - the *Peggy* and *Glasgow Fisher* - were re-located to Bo'ness which had a boiling house; ending the Clyde's direct links with whaling for the time being. In both incidences the removal of whalers from the west coast cut out the hazardous and unescorted route around the Western Isles to rendezvous with the Greenland fleet escorts at Bressay Sound.

The ensuing war gave a distinct advantage to those east coast ports that remained in the industry. The government's co-opting of London's whaling fleet as armed transports (1757 onwards) and the absence of the Dutch fleet curtailed supply and drove up prices for whale oil and bone. The combination of high prices and high bounty effectively maintained Scottish whaling at a high level throughout the war. The

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<sup>87</sup> The Treasury Bill release of payment to Philip Howe and partners; 26 Geo.II, c.11.



conclusion of the war released the London whalers to join the returning Dutch fleet to swell the number of whalers off the ice-shelf. This was at a time when American sperm whalers were beginning to flood the market with superior oil. The consequence was a sharp fall in the price of whale oil and bone immediately followed by a contraction in the number of Scottish whalers to a core of nine or ten vessels.<sup>88</sup>

### **The crewing, out-fitting and maintenance of whaling vessels**

The bounty requirements set the minimum number and composition of crew as well as the levels of victualling and whaling equipment. The average British whaler was reported (in 1771) as 300 tons in size, manned by fifty-four men and six apprentices.<sup>89</sup> While the Scottish whalers conformed in average hull size, they do not appear to have matched the average crew size and often departed from their home port with smaller crews. This practice was tolerated as the additional hands required by the bounty formula were recruited in Orkney or Shetland on the voyage north.

The accounts of the first whaler of the 1750s boom - the *Tryall's* (333 tons valued at £1612-13/4) - give details of her fitting-out and hence, mode of operation. On her first voyage (1750) for the Edinburgh Whale Fishery Company she carried six whaling boats and 272 empty blubber butts in her hull.<sup>90</sup> The crew numbered forty-six - a first mate, second mate, surgeon, five harpooners, six boat-steers and line-coilers, nineteen sailors, two carpenters, coopers and cooks. Their wages for the voyage amounted to £382-7/4; a figure that would double if the prescribed provisions, replacement of whaling equipment and basic maintenance to the hull and rigging were also included. Set against this outlay was the income from the tonnage bounty (£666) and the sale of the blubber from four walruses. By this simple tally the venture broke

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88 G. Jackson, *British Whaling Trade* (London, 1978), pp 63-4 and Lubbock, *Arctic Whalers*, pp. 101-2.

89 Macpherson, *Commerce*, III, p. 512.

90 All blubber was barrelled for delivery to the onshore boiling houses which appear to have then been situated at Leith, Bo'ness and Dunbar.



even on running costs if nothing else.<sup>91</sup> This level of government support enticed the flotation of the East Lothian and Merse Whale Fish Company of Dunbar, the Aberdeen Whale Fishing Company (both 1752) and the short-lived Anstruther Whale Fishing Company (1756). As Sir John Anstruther of Elie (the chief promoter of the latter) remarked to the Earl of Leven, 'I am assured that there can be but a trifle lost were the ship unsuccessful, the bounty given by the government being so considerable'.<sup>92</sup>

Sir John was referring to the prospect of returning 'clean' for a season having failed to kill a 'fish'. Jackson's study of the catch rate and profitability of the first generation of Scottish bounty whalers, concluded that they lacked the basic skills to kill and retain whales and were too penny-pinching to hire experienced harpooners from elsewhere. As a result the early expeditions usually came home 'clean' (having remaining in Arctic waters until 10 August to meet the bounty requirements) or with small amounts of blubber from a few walruses and seals. Indeed, over that decade three-quarters of all Scottish voyages would have been loss-making without the bounty.<sup>93</sup>

The vessels of the first Scottish whaling fleet were either English or American built. The sale of Campbeltown's two London-built whalers gives full details of the outfit and furniture of Scottish whalers of this period. The exhaustive printed inventory for each sale indicates that they were square-sterned vessels, ship-rigged, carrying top-gallants and a flying-jib. Neither inventories listed carriage guns and only the *Campbeltown's* catalogue mentioned armaments - two swivel guns (used mainly for signalling) and four muskets.<sup>94</sup> Their reliance on their naval escorts for defence is

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91 I am indebted to S. Mowat for a transcript of this account.

92 SRO, Leven and Meville MSS, GD 26/13/648/1, letter 29 November 1756.

93 Jackson, 'Scottish whaling' p. 55.

94 I am grateful to A.R. Bigwood and Mary Petrie for sight of the original printed advertisements held in private hands. The *Argyll*, lying at Port Glasgow quay, was auctioned at the Old Coffee House, Glasgow. The *Campbeltown*, in the Thames, was put up for 'sale by the candle' at Lloyd's Coffee house, London.



evident in the fact that no Scottish whaler took out a letter of marque while sailing under the bounty scheme at this time.<sup>95</sup>

### **The impact of the bounty scheme and war on the herring buss industry 1757-75**

The herring buss industry in Scotland gradually took off after the existing bounty was raised in 1757 to fifty shillings per ton of British-built buss along with an easing of the out-fitting requirements. The latter had a profound influence on the future direction of the industry as all attempts at replicating the large Dutch buss and their over-the-side off-shore fishing techniques were abandoned in favour of the locally tried and tested in-shore boat method. The Scottish buss was therefore a small mother vessel conveying between one to three boats on her deck - from which all fishing was done.<sup>96</sup> The first bounty imposed no specific design requirements for the buss other than she should be fully-decked, measuring between twenty and eighty tons and built after the 1750.<sup>97</sup> The result was that the Scottish buss fleet was made up of an assortment of mainly small square-sterned sloops and a few larger brigs.<sup>98</sup>

The raising of the bounty did not have an immediate effect as Scottish busses numbered only three by 1759.<sup>99</sup> The security factor probably played a major part in deterring investors as the Seven Years War was well under way and there was no regular naval protection on the west coast. Indeed, the first discernible rise in the number of Scottish busses is in 1760 - after the Thurot raid and recovery of British naval supremacy. Even so, by 1761 there were only seventeen busses (745 tons/ 174

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95 It is quite likely that it was not permitted as this would be, in effect, subsidising privateering.

96 The number and lengths of nets were regulated as were the number of crew and apprentices in proportion to the tonnage - five men for first twenty tons and one extra for every five tons thereafter.

97 Those with internal decks (larger busses) had to be of sufficient height to stack the statutory size of herring barrel.

98 'Campbeltown Registry of Shipping' (1763-78); GCA, CE 82/11/1.

99 Appendix C. Table: 6. 7.



men) of British origin compared with 152 Dutch busses fishing off Scotland (with a further 122 off Ireland).

Other factors were in play which explain the slow response to the higher bounty. Firstly, unlike whalers which were bought second-hand, busses had to be built after the introduction of the scheme to qualify for the bounty. There was therefore an extensive time lapse between ordering, launching and out-fitting of a new British-built buss. At first the local shipbuilding capacity on the west coast simply could not meet the demand and so many busses had to be constructed elsewhere in Britain, mainly Leith. There was also the problem of raising the necessary capital locally, though it would appear that the windfall of prize money from the *annus mirabilis* of 1760 may have played a highly significant part in financing local partnerships in the Campbeltown area.<sup>100</sup> By the following year however these initial constraints would appear to have been dissipated as British busses outnumbered the war-ravaged Dutch in Scottish waters for the first time.

### **The first boom and bust in the herring buss industry 1763-71**

With the peace (1763) the Scottish herring buss industry gathered momentum. At first the rise in numbers was over-shadowed by that of the Irish and English counterparts who benefited from a lower duty on English salt and reliable payment of their bounty out of all English tax revenue. The Scottish bounty, on the other hand, was met exclusively out of Scottish customs receipts which only just managed to kept apace with bounty voucher claims until 1767. During that year the first boom reached its height as 263 Scottish busses, employing over 12,500 men and boys, were out-fitted for the season. After 1767 however irregular payment of the bounty to owners of the

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<sup>100</sup> Macpherson notes that vast amount of prize money resulting from the taking of Havana was in local circulation by 1762; as 'some of the petty officers - each receiving £1804 - (crewmen £485 ) - by retiring to their native places, and entering the herring fishery, became men of consequence, and chief magistrates of their towns'; *Commerce*, III, footnote to p.357.



Scottish busses, leading eventually to complete default in 1770, effectively killed off the home industry.<sup>101</sup>

### **The new bounty scheme of 1771**

As only nineteen Scottish busses claimed the bounty in 1770 the scheme had to be revamped for the 1771 season; in ways not wholly advantageous to the buss promoter.<sup>102</sup> Whilst redemption of bounty vouchers was henceforth guaranteed against all government sources of revenue, in line with the English practice, the bounty was reduced to thirty shillings and the higher salt duties imposed in Scotland remained. Further practical inducements were a relaxation of the regulations concerning the outfitting of a buss and the introduction of a dual rendezvous system: the summer rendezvous (on or before 22 June) at Bressay Sound in the Shetlands; and the winter rendezvous (on or before 1 October) at Campbeltown on the Mull of Kintyre. This latter arrangement allowed busses to miss one rendezvous in order to engage in other trades without losing their bounty status.

This flexibility in deployment, coupled with the guarantee of bounty payment and the lower wage and costs of peacetime, was sufficient to spark a revival in buss ventures which peaked in 1776 with 294 busses making at least one bounty voyage. As a consequence Campbeltown grew over the 1750-77 period from a town of c.3,000 inhabitants (owning four small vessels) to c.7,000 inhabitants (owning sixty-two busses, manned by 750 men) and second only to Greenock as an exporter of barrelled herring.

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<sup>101</sup> Bounty payments were honoured years later but by then many of the original holders of receipts and gone bankrupt or sold off their receipt at a high discount to a third party.

<sup>102</sup> In the same year the press-gang in Larne Lough seized 'a great number of sailors' from Campbeltown herring busses; CE 82 /1 Collector at Campbeltown to the Board , 20 July 1773.



## The white fish industry

Fishing for cod, ling and haddock by line from an open boat required considerable expertise and local knowledge. In the mid-fifties Campbeltown wherries attempted to emulate the Dutch technique of fishing over-the-side from larger decked vessels off the Shetlands but lacked the necessary skill. Thereafter most line fishing was conducted from oared open boats, some of which were up to fifteen tons and capable of raising a sail in the right conditions. By the mid-eighteenth century however the inshore stocks along the north-east coast, the traditional centre of the industry, had been heavily over-fished.

The press-gangs of the Seven Years War inadvertently helped establish the white fish industry in the Firth of Clyde. Local tradition has it that a large number of pressed Aberdonian fishermen were paid off at the end of the war at Ayr and chose to settle on the Clyde coast. Their news of unfished stocks quickly spread back and others, notably from Elgin and Pitsligo, made the trek westwards.<sup>103</sup> By the early 1770's the government sought to intervene to encourage both the re-location and the deployment of larger vessels on the relatively unexploited off-shore banks of the Western Isles by offering premiums on the first boats on station.<sup>104</sup> Such incentives were the final tier in the interventionist fisheries schemes that mark the mercantilist system at its most developed state prior to re-structuring in the late 1780s.

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103 Graham, *Shipping trade of Ayrshire*, pp. 26-7.

104 Stornoway was the centre of the white fish trade on the north west coast.



## CHAPTER VII: SCOTTISH TRADERS IN WAR AND PEACE 1776-91

The American War of Independence breached the elaborate interlocking Atlantic trading system that had evolved under the constraints of the British Navigation Acts. In doing so it brought to an end the tobacco era in Scottish history - cancelling out the much of the overseas territories and colonial markets accumulated from the Seven Years War. The other notable casualty of the war was the illusion of a favourable 'ballance of trade' generated by the flawed national accountancy techniques.<sup>1</sup>

In the aftermath, William Pitt circulated an open letter to the Commissioners of Customs 'concerning navigation and commerce to the revenues of the Empire' as a precursor to a radical overhaul of the existing British mercantilist system.<sup>2</sup> The outcome were the Act of Registry (1786) and the Consolidation Act (1787). The former tightened the control of shipping carrying the trade of the empire whilst the latter rationalised the complex system of duties and regulations that had nurtured the all-pervading black economy.<sup>3</sup>

### **Scottish shipping losses sustained during the American War**

The American War was unquestionably a traumatic episode in the history of the eighteenth century British marine. The exact number of losses sustained by the Scottish ports is however unclear. The customs returns indicate that the numbers of vessels owned by the Scottish ports fell by around 200 vessels during the six consecutive years (1776-82) of the active war period. Indeed, the pre-war fleet tonnage level of around 91,000 tons was only regained in the first year of peace.<sup>4</sup> Hidden within this overall

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<sup>1</sup> Appendix B.

<sup>2</sup> Preface to Commissioners' returns; PRO Customs 17 /12 series.

<sup>3</sup> The Act of Registry was primarily aimed at excluding American vessels from British trade after the war; R.C. Jarvis, 'Ship Registry - 1786' *Mariner's Mirror*, 4. 1, pp. 12-30.

<sup>4</sup> Appendix C. Table: 6.1.



result are an unknown number of vessels that had been absent from the home port for over a year, which included many Scottish vessels on government contract, and, equally importantly, replacements for vessels lost during the war.<sup>5</sup>

A modern survey of losses reported to Lloyd's of London concluded that around one-third of Britain's sea-going fleet (3,386 vessels) was taken by the enemy.<sup>6</sup> By that ratio the Scottish merchant marine - then seventeen per cent of the British marine by number at the start of the war - could be expected to have lost around 580 vessels. This, of course, begs the question; was the Scottish marine's war experience typical of the British marine as a whole?

Knox, a contemporary commentator, reckoned that '...the American War almost annihilated Scottish shipping, particularly those belonging to Glasgow, Greenock and the other ports of the Clyde of which it is asserted, 313 vessels of various sizes were captured.'<sup>7</sup> Professor Devine in his seminal work on the impact of the war on the Clyde's tobacco trade, considered this statement to be 'almost certainly exaggerated'.<sup>8</sup> Supporting his verdict are the customs shipping returns for the upper Clyde ports which, if taken at face value, appear to wholly discredit Knox. Indeed, far from being 'annihilated' they indicate that the number of upper Clyde vessels was relatively unaffected until 1778, after which there was a small drop (c.10 per cent), before stabilising again after 1781.

A reconciliation of the two views requires a repeat of the Lloyd's of London survey but limited to Scottish-owned vessels.<sup>9</sup> The result shows that very few of the

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<sup>5</sup> Scottish vessels re-taken by British warships or privateers became prize to the new captor if found to have been in the hands of the enemy for more than twenty-four hours. They were not usually returned to their original owners.

<sup>6</sup> C. Wright and C.E. Fayle, *History of Lloyd's List* (London, 1928), p. 156.

<sup>7</sup> Knox, *View of the Empire*, II, pp. 533-534. Virtually half the 1775 tonnage owned by the Clyde.

<sup>8</sup> T.M. Devine, 'Glasgow Merchants in Colonial Trade 1770-1815' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Strathclyde, 1972), p. 268.

<sup>9</sup> This generates a core population of around 713 Scottish-owned vessels (c.95,500 tons). A further 164 additional vessels can be added to this database from other contemporary sources; the Liverpool Plantation Registers, letter of marque commissions, Greenock Register of Shipping, Victualling Bills, bounty receipts and advertisements and reports in newspapers. The criteria used to validate the existence of a new vessel has been a minimum of three matching features. By this system five separate vessels can be identified bearing the name



Clyde's pre-1776 stock of ocean-going vessels in American and West Indies trades (less than one hundred in number) appear to be in Scottish ownership after 1781. Reported losses were particularly high amongst the larger vessels which were hired to the government as transports or sent out as running ships during the early years of the conflict. On the other hand the owners of vessels lost while on contract to one or other of the government agencies received full compensation. Non-contracted vessels were normally covered by marine insurance available from underwriters at Glasgow, Edinburgh and London, albeit at a price.<sup>10</sup> There was therefore both the means and the business motivation to support a high rate of replacement of vessels lost to the war. This situation was not acknowledged by Knox.

More significant is his much quoted figure of 313 Clyde vessels 'of various sizes' captured. This description included the smaller vessels trading in European and home waters. The lower Firth of Clyde precincts - Ayr, Irvine and Campbeltown - were heavily involved in such trades and their customs returns indicate that the number of vessels they owned fell by half (a loss of c. 160 vessels) during the years when American raids on the west coast were at their height (1776-1781). Without knowing their replacement rate it can never be ascertained whether or not this drop, when added to the Clyde's Atlantic fleet losses, accounts for Knox's dramatic figure of 313 vessels. It would however seem plausible given the length and nature of this conflict.

### **The phases of the war at sea**

The wartime experience of the Scottish marine moved through three distinct phases. During the first (1775-77) the war at sea was fought mainly in American and West Indian waters. The second phase (1777-80) commenced with the French ports

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*Blandford* c.1750-84, the last four vessels sailing under the same master (Andrew Troop) which demonstrates the degree of loyalty Scottish masters had to a successful name.

<sup>10</sup> By 1775 Lloyd's of London had appointed agents at Greenock, Port Glasgow and Leith to survey vessels for insurance purposes.



hosting American privateers determined to carry the war back into British waters. A situation which inevitably led to the entry of France and her ally Spain into the war. The third and final phase (1780-3) was when the conflict was greatly enlarged by the entry of the Dutch and the stance of armed neutrality taken up the other major maritime powers. By then the Scottish marine, in common with rest of the British merchant marine and navy, was close to exhaustion - whereupon another year of war would see the whole overseas trade of the nation carried in neutral bottoms.

### **The first phase 1775-7: The war in American and Caribbean waters**

The rebellion, whilst long expected, degenerated into full-scale war at an unexpected rate. Devine's study of the period has concluded that the shock of war, while short-lived, was felt severely. It was therefore only during the first months of the war that the image of laid-up Virginiamen and hundreds of unruly idle hands roaming the ports of the upper Clyde conforms to the hyperbole that pre-occupied some contemporary reporters.<sup>11</sup>

Scottish-owned vessels and masters became directly involved shortly after the opening skirmishes when the American rebels besieged British forces in Boston. The ship *Glasgow* of Port Glasgow (270 tons), then in Boston harbour, was pressed into government service without consultation.<sup>12</sup> In September of that year a further unnamed vessel was hired in the Clyde to carry to Boston:

plaids Tartans, Shoes, Bonnets, Belts and shorts for One thousand private men, Sixty serjants, Sixty corporals, and Forty Drums, with other necessaries for the said Regiment, called the Royal Highland Emigrants together with Officers,

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<sup>11</sup> T.M. Devine, 'Glasgow merchants and the collapse of the tobacco trade 1775-1783', *Scottish Historical Review* (1973), 52, pp. 50-74 and 'Transport problems of Glasgow West Indies merchants during the American War of Independence 1775-83' *Transport History* (1971), IV, pp. 266-304.

<sup>12</sup> It was not until late 1776 that the Glasgow owners (John and George Buchanan ) secured the release of their vessel and awarded £500 in lieu of freight charges; D. Syrett, *Shipping in the American War 1775-83* (London, 1970), pp. 14-15.



their Servants and non-commissioned Officers with their personal arms to the number of twenty.<sup>13</sup>

From such beginnings the logistics of carrying and supplying, across the expanse of the Atlantic ocean, an army capable of crushing the rebellion in a single campaign, rapidly escalated beyond all previous experience. So much so that Syrett has described the achievements of the transport service as 'the greatest military and administrative feats of the eighteenth century'.<sup>14</sup>

The chartering of transports was in the hands of four separate government departments - the Treasury, the Victualling Office, the Ordnance and Navy Boards.<sup>15</sup> The Navy Board, responsible for contracting troop carriers, surveyed the upper Clyde ports early in 1776 and found thirty-two (poorly-seasoned, American-built) square-rigged vessels of the desired size (above 200 tons). Most were lying with undischarged cargoes of hogsheads of tobacco imported before the Chesapeake closed. Such was the need that the majority were immediately contracted.<sup>16</sup> By February 1776 the Navy Board had 101 transports totalling 38,996 tons assembled at ports around Britain of which 7,000 tons (c.35 vessels) were gathered at Greenock.<sup>17</sup> Eight of these were quickly allocated to convey an advance element of the 31st regiment from the Clyde to Cork and on to Quebec.<sup>18</sup>

The second Navy Board convoy was a major undertaking and consisted of thirty-three transports, with 3,466 officers and men of the 42nd and 71st Highlanders onboard, under the escort of *HMS Flora* (32 guns). At least fifteen of these vessels can

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<sup>13</sup> GCA, CE 61/1/9, Collector of Port Glasgow to Edinburgh, 11 September 1775.

<sup>14</sup> Syrett, *Shipping in the American War*, p. 248.

<sup>15</sup> Only one Scottish vessel was contracted by the Treasury prior to 1780 - the *Jameson & Peggy* of Kinghorn (200 tons) - enlisted while at Exeter; PRO HCA 26/60 letter 14 May 1777. I am grateful to Michael Dun for calling my attention to this entry.

<sup>16</sup> A. Brown, *History of Glasgow*, III, p. 380. The number of Scottish vessels is deduced from the size contractor's size requirement of 200 tons and above.

<sup>17</sup> These vessels generated an income of over £4000 per month in freight rates of their owners. In addition 56,000 gallons of warehoused rum was purchased by Robert Grant of Glasgow - the Victualling Office agent - for the transports; Syrett, *American War*, pp. 41 and 251.

<sup>18</sup> Devine, *Glasgow Merchants*, pp. 280-281.



be identified as belonging to the Port Glasgow. This much delayed convoy sailed from Greenock on 29 April 1776 unaware that Lord Howe had already evacuated Boston and transferred his headquarters to Halifax.<sup>19</sup> Such poor communications were typical of the era and the situation would have probably been rectified in time had not a storm scattered the convoy off the Scilly Isles. Thereafter, over two-thirds of the transports lost sight of the escorting frigate and made for Boston on their own accord.

The front-runners, arriving in ones and twos into Massachusetts Bay, fell prey to General Washington's four armed schooners working out of Marblehead. The first in - the ship *Anne* of Port Glasgow (230 tons) - was taken without a fight despite carrying carriage guns and 110 armed highlanders. Three of her sister ships - *George* (220 tons), *Annabella* (180 tons) and *Lord Howe* (200 tons) - arrived during the next ten days and were captured after a running fight.<sup>20</sup>

The credit for averting a total disaster must be shared by Captain Brisbane, in *HMS Flora*, and the highly experienced Clyde master, Humphery Taylor, in the *Bowman*. While Brisbane marshalled nine transports back into convoy after the storm, Taylor gathered up six other stragglers and held them together off-shore long enough to fall in with *HMS Merlin*. Once the true state of affairs at Boston was known the transports made for Halifax and warships were put on station to divert incoming vessels. In the final tally five transports from the Clyde convoy were lost to Washington's privateers and with them their companies of Highlanders and war supplies.<sup>21</sup> Congress did not delay in utilising their windfall to prosecute the war. The *Anne*, *Lord Howe* and *George* were quickly repaired and dispatched as armed running ships between Virginia

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<sup>19</sup> The warning came too late for the *Jane* of Port Glasgow, taken off Boston (May) with a cargo worth £6,000 mostly insured in Glasgow.

<sup>20</sup> C. Hearn, *Washington's schooners* (Maryland, 1995), pp. 174-188.

<sup>21</sup> By the end of the year sixty-six British vessels were listed as taken in Massachusetts Bay ; *Lloyd's List*, 27 December 1776.



and France.<sup>22</sup> The *Annabella* was renamed the *Rising States* and sent out as a privateer for a short-lived cruise to the West Indies in February 1777.<sup>23</sup>

American privateers had sailed south to raid the West Indies trade as soon as Congress had formally authorised their commissions in 3 April 1776. As fate would have it slave insurrections delayed the sailing of the Jamaica convoy long enough for the Americans to congregate. Thereafter survival out of convoy was almost impossible. As one master warned, 'the seas [off Florida] are swarming with privateers, you will be taken before you are forty-eight hours older.'<sup>24</sup>

The scale of early Scottish losses to these American predators is evident from the exchange of prisoners that followed. In mid-November the brig *Triton* departed from Rhode Island for a British port carrying the seamen and passengers from twenty-six British prizes of which five were Scottish owned.<sup>25</sup> All, with the exception of the army transport straggler (the *Oxford* of Port Glasgow taken heading for Halifax), had been seized in the Caribbean waters.<sup>26</sup> Not all captured vessels however remained in rebel hands as there was a fairly high degree of recapture during this early phase.<sup>27</sup>

Around the time the *Triton* sailed for Europe all hope of a reconciliation between the mother country and her colonists had evaporated. Congress now actively sought to carry the war back into British home waters with the aid of the French.<sup>28</sup> In retaliation the British government finally unleashed British privateers (11 April 1777) on the

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22 W.J. Morgan (ed.), *Naval Documents of the American Revolution* (Washington, 1976), VII, p. 300.

23 She was re-taken by *HMS Terrible* off Belle Isle April 1777; Syrett, *American War*, p. 85.

24 *Lloyd's List*, 25 October 1776.

25 Council of War Papers, Exchange of Prisoners, Rhodes Island Archives, 15 November 1776 as listed by Morgan, *Naval Documents*, VII, pp. 165-8.

26 This cartel should have included the master of the Irvine brig *Countess of Eglinton* (160 tons) taken heading for Antigua from Port Glasgow with a cargo of linens, hosiery, shoes and provisions (worth c.£4,500); Revolutionary War Prizes Cases No.9, Court of Appeal as listed by Morgan, *Naval Documents*, VI, p. 639.

27 An example was the ex-Virginian *Speirs* of Port Glasgow (180 tons) taken homeward bound from the Bay of Honduras and retaken by her own men, led by the mate. She reached Port Glasgow on 3 October 1776, three months ahead of her paroled captain; *Public Advertiser*, 23 October 1776 and *Whitehall Evening Post*, 24/26 December 1776, as listed by; Morgan, *Naval Documents*, VII, pp. 300-1.

28 The first Scottish loss to an American privateer in European waters was the brig *Isabella* from Bo'ness to Minorca; *Lloyd's List*, 7 November 1776.



shipping of 'His Majesty's rebellious American subjects' with the aim of reducing their capacity to wage war before France entered the conflict.<sup>29</sup>

### **The arrival of American privateers in Scottish waters**

This second phase of the war commenced in British waters in early April 1777 when the American brigs *Massachusetts* and *Tyrannicide* (both 20 guns/ 120 men) appeared off Cork, the major departure point for military supplies and soldiers crossing the Atlantic.<sup>30</sup> Four more joined that spring - *Commodore* (18 guns /130 men), *Reprisal* (18 guns / 130 men), *Lexington* (16 guns / 120 men) and *Dolphin* (10 guns/ 64 men). By the end of May the latter three cruisers had circumnavigated Ireland twice, netting fourteen prizes. The fate of their five Scottish captures bears witness to their commerce-destroying mission. No ransom was offered: two vessels in ballast were sunk; two vessels with cargoes were sent to France; whilst the fifth was released with the captured crews packed onboard.<sup>31</sup>

Benjamin Franklin, newly arrived in Paris, immediately saw the potential of extending this mode of warfare against Britain's commerce in home waters. On 26 May 1777 he wrote to Congress:

I have not the least doubt but that two or three Continental frigates sent into the German Ocean [North Sea], with some lesser swift-sailing craft, might intercept and seize a great part of the Baltic and Northern trade. One frigate would be sufficient to destroy the whole Greenland fisheries and take the Hudson Bay ships returning.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> A full review of naval policy is available in; D. Syrett, 'Home waters or America? The dilemma of British Naval Strategy in 1778', *Mariner's Mirror*, 77, 4, pp. 365-377.

<sup>30</sup> Report by Captain James Grayson of the *Lonsdale* of Whitehaven as listed in; K. G. Davis (ed.), *Documents of the American Revolution 1770-83* (Dublin, 1976), item xxxi, p. 73.

<sup>31</sup> *Lloyd's List*, 1 June 1777.

<sup>32</sup> H. Malo, 'American privateers at Dunkerque', *Proceedings of the United States Naval Institute*, XXXVII, 3, p. 913.



The most obvious points for interception being off Orkney and Shetland.

The first American privateer to appear at the entrance to the Firth of Clyde was the *Mufflin* (20 guns) early in July. From the outset there were elements of psychological warfare involved in these 'visits' designed to maximise the disruption. As the master of the sloop *James* of Greenock (looted of her rigging and sunk off the Mull of Kintyre) declared, his captors had deliberately let it slip that they had left Boston a month earlier in company with ten others intent on raiding in British waters.<sup>33</sup> His captor, flying a white pennant with a pine tree emblem and the melodramatic motto 'Appeal to Heaven', took two other prizes in the North Channel in as many days. As before, their crews were put on board a passing brig heading for Ballyshannon and the prizes sent off to Bordeaux .

Captures so close to the unprotected Clyde ports had the desired effect of spreading intense consternation. On 30 June the Comptroller at Port Glasgow sent a night express to Provost Robert Donald concerning the dire security situation in the North Channel. In turn, the despairing Provost wrote (at four o'clock in the morning) to Lord George Germain, the Secretary of State for the Colonies:

these rascally privateers have been within a few hours sail of this place...it is extremely hard, that although we have made repeated applications, that the Lords of the Admiralty will not spare us one frigate to protect above three hundred sail that are continually coming and going and lying in the ports of Greenock and Port Glasgow, besides from seven to eight thousand hogsheads of tobacco and great quantities of rum, sugar and other valuable commodities.

In his lengthy discourse he related that, pending a response from central government, the Duke of Argyll had been approached to organise the defence of the Clyde coast. On his orders two companies of the 70th Regiment had already been sent to Greenock and

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<sup>33</sup> Affidavit of Abram Russell; Davis, *Documents of the American Revolution*, item lxxvi. p. 130-131. At least one other Boston Privateer, the *Tartar* (Grimes) raided Scottish waters finally burning her four prizes off Fair Isle in the Pentland Firth that August; J. Eunson, *Shipwrecks of Fair Isle* (Stromness, undated), p. 6.



Port Glasgow and four companies of the Royal Scots at Edinburgh and one of dragoons at Hamilton put on alert. The Provost concluded; 'but alas, this will not save our shipping and warehouses, and indeed the two towns [Port Glasgow and Greenock] should these rascals come in. Nothing can be of immediate service but a frigate of war which we have the greatest right to expect'.<sup>34</sup> In the meantime shipping activity in the Clyde and the North Channel came to a halt.

The campaign to have a naval frigate as guard ship for the Clyde was immediately taken up by the local Member of Parliament, the energetic Lord Frederick Campbell, in unison with the Convention of Royal Burghs.<sup>35</sup> Barritt's study of the navy in the Clyde in 1777 concluded that the Admiralty were not in a position to respond adequately with only ten frigates in home waters. It was therefore not until late July, weeks after another nine vessels had been captured in the North Channel, that an old third-rater - *Arethusa* - was finally sent to cruise between the Mull of Kintyre and Belfast Lough.<sup>36</sup> The local magistrates of Campbeltown remained unplaced by this belated gesture and minuted that they were 'taking into serious consideration the present alarming situation of the Burrow from the American Privateers now hovering upon the coasts and in the Irish Channel'.<sup>37</sup>

The upper Clyde ports' response was to raise a local subscription of £3,000 (filled in two hours) to arm three local vessels for the defence of their coast and shipping - *Charming Fanny*, *Kattie* and *Ulysses*. Devine's examination of newspaper reports concluded that, despite their overtly warlike departure and the zealousness of their crews, the eight-day cruise of the Irish Sea by the latter two vessels ended in farce. Their appearance simply heightened the local hysteria causing masters to run their vessels onshore or disposed of their registers overboard. At Belfast Lough they were

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34 Affidavit of Abram Russell; Davis, *Documents of the American Revolution*, item lxxv, p. 124.

35 Lord Frederick was third son of the Duke of Argyll.

36 Barritt, 'The Navy and the Clyde', p. 33. Captures 5-14 July; *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, 12 and 19 July 1777.

37 Campbeltown Town Council Minutes 10 July 1777 as quoted by Bigwood 'Campbeltown Busses', p. 88.



arrested as suspected American raiders and, after their release, their crews were rough-handled by a pro-American lead mob.<sup>38</sup>

By December 1777 the First Lord of the Admiralty, Lord Sandwich, advised the Prime Minister, Lord North, that a switch to a defensive posture was unavoidable as the conflict at sea was certain to escalate in European waters. The immediate outcome was the reluctant recall of twenty frigates to defend home waters.

In the meantime losses mounted on both sides in what had become a war of attrition. In February 1778 a committee of the House of Lords assessed that 173 American cruisers (2,556 guns, 14,000 men) had taken 733 British vessels - of which 47 were released and 127 were retaken. In doing so the African trade was all but annihilated and the insurance to North America and the West Indies had double to five per cent with convoy and fifteen per cent if running independently. On the credit side they reckoned that the colonies in rebellion had lost 904 vessels and been expelled from both the whaling and cod fisheries.<sup>39</sup>

Such crude numbers imply that the Royal Navy, with the help of British privateers, was then winning this war of attrition in West Indies and American waters. This advantage was however already eroded by the actions of American raiders in British waters. It only required the entry of a European maritime power on their side to escalate this fratricidal war into a major international conflict to reversed the attrition process at sea.

The entry of France into the war was long expected. In the same month as the committee reported on shipping losses, intelligence received in London made it clear that both France and Spain were, after the British army's defeat at Saratoga, making preparations to recognise an independent United States of America. As yet the French preparations for war were incomplete and so an appeasing gesture was made towards British remonstrations at the support given to American privateers. This took the form

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<sup>38</sup> Devine, 'Glasgow Merchants' p. 271.

<sup>39</sup> Macpherson, *Commerce*, p. 617.



of an edict (widely ignored) ordering all American cruisers and their prizes out of French ports. Such pretences were soon dropped as Article XVII of the Franco-American Alliance explicitly gave American privateers full liberty to use French ports with effect from 17 July of that year.<sup>40</sup>

War with France was now inevitable and in an attempt to plug the holes in coastal defence and convoy escorts the Admiralty hired eight armed vessels in lieu of frigates. By March two (under naval commanders) were allocated to the Clyde - *Three Brothers* (30 guns) and *Satisfaction* (20 guns). At the same time moves were made to activate the Leith - London convoy system.<sup>41</sup>

### **The first cruise of John Paul Jones into Scottish waters**

It was during this period that the Dumfriesshire-born American John Paul Jones sailed from Brest (April 1778) in the *Ranger* (315 tons/ 18 nine pounders) to raid in the Irish Sea.<sup>42</sup> By then attitudes to warfare had hardened by an Admiralty order to burn the American seaports whenever the opportunity arose. The war of attrition had also left large numbers of American seamen in British hands. Paul Jones's declared objectives were therefore '...to put an end to burnings in America by making a good fire in England of shipping' and secure prisoners for exchange.<sup>43</sup> His exploits in the Irish sea - the landings at Whitehaven and Kirkcudbright and the capture of the 20 gun sloop-of-war *Drake* off Carrickfergus - are now enshrined in early American Naval history.

His landing made from the *Ranger's* cutter on St Mary's Isle, Kirkcudbright has particular relevance to Scottish maritime affairs as it had a profound psychological impact on the coastal communities. While Paul Jones only managed to take the plate

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<sup>40</sup> F.R. Stark, *The Abolition of Privateering and the Declaration of Paris* (New York, 1897), p. 125.

<sup>41</sup> Leith does not appear to have been allocated regular armed guard ships until 1779.

<sup>42</sup> Paul Jones - as captain of the *Alfred* (30 guns) of the newly created Continental Navy - had previously taken the *Molly* of Port Glasgow off the Grand Banks of Newfoundland and, rather naively, entrusted her crew to sail her to an American port - they made for Londonderry instead; *Lloyd's List*, 1 February 1777.

<sup>43</sup> S.E. Morison, *John Paul Jones* (Boston, 1959), p. 135.



from Lord Selkirk's house and not the man himself for exchange, he had demonstrated just how defenceless the Scottish coast was having been stripped of the means of self-defence by the Disarming Act of 1746. Furthermore, the loss of the sloop-of-war *Drake* proved the case for the stationing of a 'permanent' frigate on the west coast. John Murdoch of Kirkcudbright summarised the situation in his indignant open letter to the Provost of Dumfries, published within days of the landing:

Surely the administration will now extend its attention to the northern part of the [British] Island, will give us armed vessels for the protection of our trade, and if no part of the regular forces can be spared, will at least permit us to provide for the defence by a well regulated militia.<sup>44</sup>

At the time of his raid (in addition to the armed vessel *Satisfaction*) the naval frigate *Thetis* (32 guns) was in the Clyde. She had been sent north to escort a new convoy that was slowly gathering to transport a further five regiments of Highlanders (6,500 men) to Halifax. Paul Jones probably knew of her presence from the master of the Irvine schooner that he had previously sunk in the Irish Sea. The guard ships and frigate were, on the other hand, quite unaware of his presence even though he chased a small cutter into the lower firth as far as Ailsa Craig. The first to bring the news of his presence was the Clyde's customs wherry *Cumbrae* which found the visiting frigate in Lamlash Bay. Glasgow received the news by an express from Whitehaven around the same time and immediately dispatched a small craft to Ayr and Irvine to stop all further sailings until the armed vessel *Doctor* could be summoned to guard the Ayrshire coast. As a consequence the sailing of the Navy Board convoy was postponed whilst the hunt for John Paul Jones and his prize was instigated.<sup>45</sup> The force sent out to find him was substantial - in the North Channel *HMS Thetis* met up with the frigate *Boston* (28 guns) from Waterford and the armed vessel the *Heart of Oak* (20 guns) of Liverpool. They

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<sup>44</sup> *Cumberland Pacquet* as quoted by J. Gordon, 'A chronicle of press reports relating to John Paul Jones', *Scottish Genealogist*, XX, 2, p. 45.

<sup>45</sup> Barrett lays most of the blame for the delay on the inter-departmental mismanagement - not the raid; 'The Navy and the Clyde', p. 40.



were later joined by the armed ship *Satisfaction* and the frigate *Stag* (32 guns) out from Belfast in what proved to be a fruitless sweep of the Irish Sea.<sup>46</sup> By the time the convoy, 'the finest fleet ever seen', finally sailed from the Clyde at the end of May, Paul Jones was already back in Brest. In the aftermath however it was generally assumed in government circles that he was after the army transports.

Local officials on the west coast, on the other hand, were much more concerned with his precedent-making landings which were bound to be attempted by others. Campbeltown was particularly vulnerable to a 'visit' by virtue of its exposed location and fleet of herring busses and so set up its own early warning system. This was a fast local vessel that cruised the immediate coastline of the Mull of Kintyre guided by intelligence passed on via three signal stations (each manned by three men) located at Corvin, the islands of Sanda and Davaar. In the town a night watch of twenty men was instigated and two hundred men were enlisted in a local defence militia to counter any landings.<sup>47</sup> Across the firth at Ayr a guard of thirteen men was appointed to raise the alarm and the local gentry took the precaution of removing their furniture inland.<sup>48</sup>

In the upper Clyde, Lord Frederick Campbell was the prime mover in having a 'permanent battery' raised at Greenock, known as Fort Jervis, to command the anchorage and entrance into the Clyde estuary. The Cumbrae Lighthouse Trustees again funded the structure and the twelve cannons acquired from Carron Ironworks in September 1778. Almost all of the costs were eventually recovered from the government.<sup>49</sup>

The Clyde's defences were never tested. By the summer of 1778, the first wave of American privateers in European waters were on their way home to re-fit as naval stores at the French ports were virtually exhausted. Even in departing they continued to inflict damage on Britain's ability to wage war overseas. A case in question was the

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<sup>46</sup> Morison, *John Paul Jones*, p. 161.

<sup>47</sup> C. McTaggart, 'Campbeltown in the 18th century' lecture delivered 1923 and reprinted in the *Campbeltown Courier*, pp. 64-7.

<sup>48</sup> Dunlop, *Ayr*, p. 202.

<sup>49</sup> £100 was discounted for commissions and charges; Renwick, *Extracts from the Records of the Burgh of Glasgow*, VIII, p. 4.



*General Mifflin* (20 six pounders/ 20 swivels/ 170 men ex-*Isaac* of Liverpool) which intercepted seven unescorted Archangel traders off Shetland (28 June-11 July). The dearth of naval stores is evident from the fact that the smaller vessels were looted for anchors, masts, sails and rigging before being scuttled. A larger vessel was retained as a store ship for this plunder while the two major prizes (carrying 1,600 and 1,000 masts respectively) were sent off to France with prize crews.<sup>50</sup>

Shortly afterwards Britain chose its moment and seized two French warships in British waters which instantly brought a declaration of war. Consequently, from August 1778 onwards, letters of marque were issued against the French marine.

### **Paul Jones's second raid into Scottish waters**

A year later the west coast was again in turmoil over the reports of a new flotilla being fitted out by Paul Jones at L' Orient. As a consequence the Scottish revenue cruisers were put on alert and armed to their 'fullest extent' as the first line of defence.<sup>51</sup> The Duke of Argyll also sent warning, prematurely as it happened, to the magistrates of Campbeltown that Paul Jones was out with six other vessels with the avowed intention of burning the herring buss fleet and the town itself. In this climate belated preparations were made to repel any 'visits'. At the Duke's personal intervention, Captain Mar of the Royal Engineers was sent to advise the town council on the building of two battery platforms for the eighteen pounders needed to command the entrance to Campbeltown Loch.<sup>52</sup> The government's aversion to establishing militias in Scotland was overcome around this time as companies of fencibles were permitted to be raised in the maritime counties. A recruiting party for the Lord Frederick Campbell's West Fencibles scored a remarkable success for the war effort in February 1779 when they

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<sup>50</sup> Lubbock, *Arctic Whalers*, p. 117.

<sup>51</sup> H.H. Holland, *The King's Customs* (London, 1910), ii, pp. 490-1.

<sup>52</sup> These cannons were in position by early 1780; McTaggart, 'Life in Campbeltown', p. 65.



boarded and seized the Continental ship *Monmouth* in the Lochindaal anchorage of Islay.<sup>53</sup>

The threat was real enough as Paul Jones's second cruise into Scottish waters (August-September 1779) was in the *Bonhomme Richard* (ex-*Duras* 40 guns) with three consorts - frigates *Alliance* and *Pallas* and corvette *Vengeance* - a force which had the potential to devastate the Scottish ports and shipping. He was probably aware of naval patrols in the Irish Sea and the new coastal defences of the Clyde as his flotilla stood well out to sea, passing west of Ireland and the Hebrides, on their north-about cruise. North of Lewis he took his first prizes in Scottish waters which was dispatched to Bergen once they had cleared the Pentland Firth, after which his commanders bickered over objectives and parted company.<sup>54</sup> His next landfall was south of Dunbar (14 September 1779) where he was re-joined by the *Pallas*, which had been cruising off the north east coast of England. The overland report from Dunbar of a 'French squadron' taking two Riga-bound colliers spread panic in the Forth. Adam Smith, then a Customs Commissioner, immediately informed the Commander-in-Chief of Scotland who had raised, in the space of a single day, three batteries; two at the old citadel of Leith and one at Newhaven involving; 'thirty guns, besides carronades and howitzers, one hundred stands of small arms from the castle... and a guard ... mounted all night'.<sup>55</sup>

Tacking up the Forth two days later Paul Jones took the Kirkcaldy collier *Friendship*, detaining her master as a pilot, and Sir John Anstruther's yacht the *Royal Charlotte*.<sup>56</sup> The Forth's revenue cutter, sent out to ascertain his whereabouts, had a

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<sup>53</sup> She was outward bound from Casco Bay, America, with a cargo of masts, yards and booms for the French Navy; GCA, CE 82/1/5 Collector of Campbeltown to the Board, 20 February 1779.

<sup>54</sup> They were released a few months later by the Admiralty Court of Denmark and escorted back to Leith by the guard ship *Alfred*; *Glasgow Mercury*, 13 April 1780.

<sup>55</sup> *Glasgow Mercury*, 19 September 1779. Thereafter, an officer with eighteen to twenty artillery men was permanently stationed at the Leith battery. *OSA Edinburgh*, VI, p. 574. The east coast was already in a state of alarm before Paul Jones arrival, following the cruise of the *Comtesse de la Brionne* of Dunkirk (frigate built 26 x nine pounds/ 150 men) off the Forth a few weeks earlier. She ransomed three vessels which caused the local underwriters to refuse insurance on London-bound vessels. This may explain Paul Jones's slim pickings; *Glasgow Mercury*, 26 August 1779.

<sup>56</sup> Morison, *John Paul Jones*, p. 216. The *Friendship* was probably 'of Wemyss'. The *Royal Charlotte* had come along side the *Bonhomme Richard* mistaking her for *HMS Romney*.



narrow escape having got within pistol shot before sheering off.<sup>57</sup> His primary objective was to land a party at Leith who would demand a ransom of a minimum of £50,000 under threat of close bombardment. A violent gale however blew him out of Forth and carried him south to his engagement with *HMS Serapis* and immortality.<sup>58</sup> His capture of this man-of-war in British home waters (taking 500 prisoners) was an enormous propaganda coup for the American cause and greatly impressed Franklin and the heads of state of the neutral powers, particularly Catherine of Russia.

Paul Jones never raided Scottish waters again but the spectre of his return haunted the civil authorities for the duration of the war. George Chalmers, then a lobbyist for the Convention of Royal Burghs, used such anxieties to raise of a further £7,000 to complete the Forth Clyde Canal from Glasgow to the sea at Bowling. A cost which he reckoned 'would be more than compensated in one year of war'.<sup>59</sup>

### **Franklin's privateers in Scottish waters 1779-80**

The next wave of raiders in Scottish waters following immediately on the heels of Paul Jones and were led by the 'renegado' commanders - Patrick Dowlin, Edward Macatter and Luke Ryan. The privateering activities of these disaffected Irish-born masters were legitimised by Congressional commissions issued by Franklin, now the plenipotentiary American ambassador to the French court. Franklin's compelling need was to acquire British prisoners for exchange for Americans held in British jails and hulks.<sup>60</sup>

Dunkirk was their chosen base as it was exempt from the press of the French navy and held its own Vice Admiralty Prize Court. Of the one hundred and fifty privateers registered with the 'Admiralty of Dunkerque', seventy-eight were under the

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<sup>57</sup> Holland, *The King's Customs*, ii, pp. 490-1.

<sup>58</sup> During the night he passed the frigate *Emerald* and the armed ships *London* and *Content* heading for Leith.

<sup>59</sup> Macpherson, *Commerce*, III, p. 641.

<sup>60</sup> W. M. Clark, *Ben Franklin's Privateers* (Baton Rouge, 1956), p. 9.



command of Americans (six under letters issued by Congress via Franklin). Few, if any, placed capturing British seaman for exchange above prize money in their decision-making.

These masters armed their fast cutters in a markedly different manner from that previously adopted by the French having learned from their earlier engagements with resolute British masters. As a privateering prospectus for the *Jeunne Dunkerquoise* (c.120 tons/ 60 men) concluded:

The war in which the Americans are engaged against their metropole has forced them to seek the means of resisting English force ...instead of equipping the privateer after the European manner with 12 or 14 three-pound guns, it will be armed with 5 six-pounders and 5 one-pound swivels, which can be put in action from either side of the vessel and with a rapidity twice as great as cannon mounted in the accustomed way. For this reason the 5 six-pound guns will do the work of ten. In addition to this remarkable advantage, the crew will remain invisible.<sup>61</sup>

This combination of speed, weight of broadside and large crew, proved a highly successful formula against lightly-armed merchantmen, packets and rival privateers. So much so that Macatter, Dowlin, Fall and Ryan, were ranked amongst the top six privateering masters in terms of value of prizes brought into French ports.<sup>62</sup> These particular masters had a great advantage over their French counterparts in that they were one-time smugglers with an intimate knowledge of inshore Scottish waters.

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<sup>61</sup> Malo, 'American Privateers', p. 953.

<sup>62</sup> Macatter was ranked first capturing prizes to the value of 1,820,280 livres. Dowling fourth (1,539,045 livres); Fall sixth (793,669 livres) and Ryan seventh (675,521 livres); *ibid.* p.952. The livre was superseded by the franc in 1795.



## Luke Ryan's descents on the Scottish coast

The five cruises of ex-Port Rush smuggler Luke Ryan illustrate the blend of personal profit (prize-taking) mixed with anti-British establishment sentiment that had been harnessed to Franklin's cause. They also serve to demonstrate how effective raids on remote anchorages and villages was in creating a nemesis - the mention of whose name was sufficient to disrupt shipping of a major firth and have the guard ships and local militia patrolling the coastline.

Ryan - in the *Black Prince* - was the first of Franklin's privateers to run the North Channel to foray 'among the herring busses' and anchorages of the west coast.<sup>63</sup> He arrived in September 1779 just as Paul Jones was departing from the Forth thereby re-fuelling the general state of anxiety. He announced his presence by bombarding a village on Lismore island (Argyll), until provisions were forthcoming, and setting fire to two brigs found in the anchorage before turning south for Dunkirk.<sup>64</sup> On 24 March 1780 he set sail from Dunkirk as master of a new privateer - the *Fearnought* (150 tons/ 14 six pounders/ 12 swivels) - under a new Franklin commission. His crew numbered ninety-six 'of whom forty-five were Irish or American and the rest French, Spanish, Italian and Portuguese' and would appear to have shared their master's lack of interest in taking prisoners for exchange during their east-west circumnavigation of Scotland.<sup>65</sup> Ryan's tactic to avoid detection was to pass up the east coast to the Pentland Firth before taking his first prize, a Newcastle whaler. He repeated this pattern on his third raid into Scottish waters, departing Dunkirk 8 July.

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<sup>63</sup> He was the *de facto* commander of the cutter *Black Prince* (*ex-Friendship* of Port Rush). Already in the Western Isles was the cutter *Commandant* of Dunkirk sailing under English colours, who recaptured a large Spanish vessel from the prize crew of a Scottish privateer, took a Liverpool brig and ransomed a Saltcoats brig in Lowlander's Bay Jura; GCA CE 82/1/5 Collector of Campbeltown to Edinburgh, 20 September 1779.

<sup>64</sup> One Continental officer declared, 'I have sailed with many brave men, Com. John Paul Jones & Co., yet none of them equal to this Capt. Luke Ryan for skill and bravery', as quoted by; Clark *Franklin's Privateers*, p. 125.

<sup>65</sup> *Glasgow Mercury*, 14 April 1780.



Ryan was not the only raider cruising off Scotland at that time as the master of his first prize - a Saltcoats brig *en route* from Christiansand to the Clyde with deals - attested too:

on the 9th July we fell in with the *Rising Sun* privateer of Dunkirk, 20 guns of 9 pounders, off Buchanness, and after long consideration with the captain of the privateer at last ransomed the vessel for 120 guineas and took one of the seaman as a ransom. On the 12th we unluckily fell in with the *Fearnought* of Dunkirk, Luke Ryan Commander, and as the crew found that the vessel was already ransomed a few days before they plundered her of everything that [they] could belonging to master and men. On the 15th we fell in with John Paul Jones as Commodore of three frigates when the vessel was plundered a second time and all the clothes, liquors and 10/- in silver taken from the crew.<sup>66</sup>

His third captor was probably Macatter - in the *Black Princess* - on his way home from terrorising the North Channel and who took this opportunity to maintain the state of tension left behind him.

Ryan's wish to emulate Paul Jones reached fulfilment on the afternoon of 24 July when the *Fearnought* entered Stornoway harbour where 'the crew landed...and after plundering the town they carried off some of the principal inhabitants as hostage for ransom of houses'. The landing was wholly unopposed as the town's people could not 'prevent privateers [by arming themselves] they are liable to the penalties inflicted by statute. If they remain unarmed then they are at the mercy of every boat crew the enemy may choose to send ashore'.<sup>67</sup> A few days later and fifteen miles further down the coast in Loch Shiel he made the local farmer a prisoner and dallied with a group of Londonderry gentlemen 'pleasuring to the Highlands', before extracting a small ransom. He then made for Portree on the Isle of Skye where he may have had old smuggling friends as he did not threaten the town, choosing to pay for his provisions instead.

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid, 27 July 1780.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid, 10 August 1780 letter from Portree, Isle of Skye.



Sailing up Loch Duich he landed at Kintail to plunder the local public house of eighty guineas.

By then Stornoway had partially recovered from the 'terrible panick' of his first visit and had gathered some eight or nine armed English merchantmen in the harbour to repel any further landings; 'but it is really hard that we do not [have] solid defence against these plundering vermin'.<sup>68</sup> Ryan did not however attempt any further visits on his return passage back through the Minches to France.

During these first three raids in Scottish waters Ryan had taken twelve prizes and demonstrated the potential for large scale disruption by armed descents on the unprotected stretches of the Scottish coast. As an Inverness gentlemen stated in a letter to the *London Chronicle*; 'on the west coast the *Fearnought*, American privateer, Luke Ryan commander, reigns uncontrolled'.<sup>69</sup>

The political cost of allowing Irish commanders to sail under American Letters from French ports had however been escalating during Ryan's latest cruise which put Franklin under great pressure to cancel their commissions. Consequently, Ryan's next foray into the North Sea (8 -22 August) on the *Mareshal* of Dunkirk, was undertaken with a regular French commission. This short cruise netted him fourteen prizes.

His declared ambition to return to Scottish waters with a more powerful vessel capable of tackling the Forth's guard ships was realised when he received command of the two-year old *Calonne* (ex-*Tartar* 32 guns/ 250 men) in 1781. His luck ran out however while heading north as he was captured off St Abb's Head (3 May) by *HMS Berwick* and *Belle Poule*, having mistaken the latter for a merchantman. Macatter was also captured in October of that year and joined Ryan in the dock of the Old Bailey the following year, on the charge of 'felony and piracy on the high seas'. Both were sentenced to death but were pardoned after the intervention of the French crown.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> SRO, GD 427/218/8, John Downie of Stornoway to George Gillander of Highfield, 26 July and 12 August 1780.

<sup>69</sup> *London Chronicle*, 19-22 August 1780.

<sup>70</sup> D.A. Petrie, 'The Piracy Trial of Luke Ryan' *American Neptune*, 55, 3, pp. 185-204.



## The height of the security neuroses 1780-1

Rumours of imminent 'visits' and phantom landings by Paul Jones and Ryan were at their height during the summer of 1780. The state of anticipation in the Clyde can be surmised from the *Childers* incident. This sloop-of-war and her escort the cutter *Pilote* had been sent up from Liverpool specifically to counter any attempted landings by Luke Ryan on the exposed townships of the outer Firth of Clyde. By way of preparation their commander had then sail out from Loch Ryan into the expanse of the lower firth to exercise in a mock skirmish. Their firing of cannon put the whole coast in state of alarm which brought out the guard ship *Satisfaction* from Greenock and the visiting warships *Boston*, *Stag* and *Ranger* from Campbeltown. The fiasco ended in the *Childers* being boarded 'after a good deal of difficulty'.<sup>71</sup>

With better communication the armed vessels (along with the customs cutters 'double mann'd and Gun'd') were fairly effective in reducing losses to enemy privateers. In April 1780 the Clyde's latest armed escort - *Three Sisters* (20 guns) - supported by the sloop *Ranger* and the cutter *Expedition*, fought off two French 'frigates' (32 and 20 guns) saving their convoy of sixty sail from capture.<sup>72</sup> In August of that year the *Lairn* customs cutter engaged a large French privateer (22 guns) off Ailsa Craig long enough for the becalmed frigate *Boston* to work up close enough to secure her with a broadside.<sup>73</sup>

Beyond the guarded firths however the numerous Dunkirk cruisers in Scottish waters enjoyed virtually a free hand. The reports from that summer offer an insight into the dangers facing Scottish traders venturing out to sea.<sup>74</sup> Most reports involved hit and run raiders; with the notable exception of Dunkirker *Duc de Estissac* (20 guns) who ransomed at least eight Scottish vessels during her extended cruise off the east coast.

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71 *Glasgow Mercury*, 17 August 1780.

72 *Ibid.*, 14 April 1780.

73 *Ibid.*, 10 August 1780.

74 *Ibid.*, successive reports May to October 1780.



Further out to sea, the approaches to the Norwegian and Danish coasts were well patrolled by French and American cruisers who took a sizeable number of Scottish vessels. On the west coast sailings were temporarily suspended by the cruise of two large privateers *Madame Adrum* (40 guns) and the *Duc de Chartres* (24 guns) in the North Channel. Later in the month the Glasgow insurance market was again in turmoil over the news of the loss of three Atlantic-bound Clyde vessels - *Catherine*, *Loudon*, and *Margaret* - taken off Cape Clear by a sixty-four gun French man-of-war.<sup>75</sup>

Communication with the Western Isles was cut in late October when another Irish renegado, calling himself Kane, took the *Islay Packet* out from West Loch Tarbet and carried her off northward along with the twenty passengers onboard. He also put out much misinformation by informing his victims that his privateer was Ryan's *Fearnought*. A day later in the Sound of Mull when ransoming a large brig he was master of Macatter's *Black Prince*.<sup>76</sup> Invoking such names had the desired effect and the frigate *Seaford* and her cutter, then on fisheries protection duty, was sent to chase him out of Scottish waters.<sup>77</sup>

### **The permanent stationing of a frigate in the Clyde**

After his departure (December) an exasperated Provost of Glasgow demanded the permanent stationing of the *Seaford* in the Clyde:

For these last two years our Coast has been very much infested and our trade distressed, by a set of Piratical Smugglers and yet from the unfitness of the *Satisfaction*, they have all escaped with impunity... We must entreat of their

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid. This news followed closely on the report of the capture of the *Venus* of Port Glasgow taken en route to Savannah.

<sup>76</sup> GCA, CE 82/1/5, Collector of Campbeltown to Edinburgh, 23 October 1780.

<sup>77</sup> Bad weather stopped them rounding the Mull of Kintyre, during which time Kane ran south to Loch Ryan where he attempted to take the incoming *Glasgow* of Port Glasgow; *ibid.*, referring to letter from Hugh Wylie, Provost of Glasgow to Captain Samber, 14 November 1780.



Lordships, Seriously to Consider the Naked and defenceless state of our Coast  
& be pleased to order a frigate of 24 guns, if she sails fast, will effect.<sup>78</sup>

The *Seaforth*, a fast-sailing copper-bottomed frigate, was formally allocated that month. This did not end complaints to the Admiralty as her master, Brabazon Christian, failed to return to the Clyde after his cruise off the Western Isles in search of Kane. Christian had unilaterally decided that Clyde's coastal trade was less important than the east coast fisheries and so rounded Scotland in search of his quarry arriving in Leith in January 1781. He arriving back in the Clyde in early April, an absence of more than two months, to face the wrath of the city fathers. To curb his scope for future independent actions they demanded that in future the city magistrates should direct his movements. These were to be restricted to no further than Cork, when convoying south, or one hundred leagues west of Torry Island, when patrolling the North Channel. The matter was never resolved as Christian remained aloof and the Admiralty were reluctant to intervene. As it transpired neither Ryan nor Paul Jones (nor their imitators) returned to exploit the frigate's absences or test the new coastal defences at Campbeltown and Greenock.

In the Forth the neglected state of security was hurriedly addressed after Paul Jones's visit. At sea three armed vessels - *Content* (22 guns), *Leith* (20 guns) and *Alfred* (20 guns) - were hired by the Admiralty as guard ships and convoy escorts. Whilst they deterred small privateers, they would have been over-powered had Ryan succeeded in reaching the Forth in the *Calonne*. On land a new battery of four twenty-pounders was raised on Inch Garvie island to support the shore batteries at Leith and supplied with one hundred rounds. To cover the anchorage at Inverkeithing and deny the enemy access to the upper Forth and the coal fields on the northern shore, a further battery of eight twenty-pounders and a number of field pieces, was assembled to the east of North Queensferry.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid, letter from Hugh Wylie to J. Crawford, M.P. , 15 December 1780.

<sup>79</sup> *OSA*, Parish of Inverkeithing, X, p. 514.



## William Fall's descent on east coast ports - 1781

The last 'American' commander to harass the Scottish coast stayed well away from these batteries. William Fall was a war-hardened master who had previously sunk, after a three-and-a-half hour engagement, the Leith letter of marque vessel *Eagle* (140 tons/ 16 guns/ 40 men) on her run to Portugal in February 1781.<sup>80</sup> On his second cruise (late May-early June) in the cutter - *Sans Peur* of Dunkirk (120 tons/ 19 guns and 12 swivels/ 85 men) - he fully exposed the vulnerability of the east coast ports outside the Forth's defensive cordon to a determined attacker.<sup>81</sup>

His presence in Scottish waters was first reported 21 May when he chased a brig in Dunbar harbour mouth and bombarded the town in his frustration. Fortunately for the town's inhabitants, an armed cutter was in the harbour at the time and was able to assist the brig in fending him off.<sup>82</sup> The following day he made a landing on the Isle of May where he demanded only water from the light keepers and put ashore fourteen prisoners from previous captures on his cruise north. The next day he took two sloops off Arbroath and worked in shore to ransom the town for no less than £30,000, the payment of which was to be guaranteed by taking hostage of six notaries; 'be speedy, or I shoot your town away directly, and I [will] set fire to it.' The local magistrates fobbed him off until armed reinforcements arrived from Montrose. On receiving their final rebuttal he fired a few heated shot into the town 'knocking down some chimney tops, and burning the fingers of those who took up his balls' before sailing off in pursuit of a passing sloop.<sup>83</sup>

Moving north he stopped and ransomed two more sloops and chased a cutter into Aberdeen harbour despite volleys being fired at him from the blockhouse and the new

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<sup>80</sup> The Leith master reported from captivity in Ostend that had Fall known that he was a privateer he would have left his crew to drown; *Glasgow Mercury*, 27 February 1781.

<sup>81</sup> He sailed under a French commission for Porean & Co., of Dunkirk.

<sup>82</sup> Malo, 'American Privateers', p. 968.

<sup>83</sup> *OSA*, Parish of Arbroath, , VII, p. 345.



shore battery at Torry. In the harbour he cut out two letter of marque vessels abandoned by the crews. One was stripped of her provisions and rigging before being set alight whilst the other - the cutter *Liberty* of Leith (150 tons/ 14 guns/ 12 swivels) *en route* to Lisbon - he placed under the command of his lieutenant and renamed her *La Liberte*.<sup>84</sup> This new consort was lost days later when she ran aground at Flushing on attempted raid on British shipping in the estuary. After which Fall gave up that scheme and returned to plague the north-east (11 June) ransoming three more sloops off Aberdeen and bombarding Peterhead's south harbour before being chased out to sea by a frigate.

Fall's descent (1781) on the east coast ports with a small cutter incited further additions to Scotland's coastal defences, all at considerable cost to the government. A substantial fortified battery of twelve cannon (nine, twelve and eighteen-pounders) was raised on the 'island' of Dunbar harbour within months of his visit.<sup>85</sup> At Peterhead, a small fort and guardhouse was constructed on Keith Inch to cover the south harbour. Learning from the poor performance of the Torry battery at Aberdeen, this new fort received four twelve and eighteen-pounders.<sup>86</sup> Although Fall had not raided in the extreme north, the vulnerability of the Shetlands was acknowledged with the dispatch of Captain Fraser, Chief Engineer for Scotland, to repair Fort Charlotte, which was subsequently garrisoned for the remainder of the war.<sup>87</sup>

Reports from the outlying areas of landings from enemy privateers continued up until July of the last year of hostilities (1782).<sup>88</sup> In May of that year, the whole east coast was put on alert and the Forth-London convoy stopped from sailing by the

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84 PRO HCA 26, letters 27 January 1781.

85 OSA, Parish of Dunbar , V, p. 471.

86 Ibid, Parish of Peterhead, , XVI, p. 596.

87 Ibid, Parish of Lerwick, III, p. 420.

88 In January a landing party looted a few houses on Kintyre before being rounded up by the local militia. In late April, a large American schooner stopped all sailing off Peterhead . A month later, a French privateer made a descent on South Ronaldsay, stripping the local inhabitants of their possessions, clothes and bedding. Two or three enemy privateers were also reported in the North Channel that month, bringing the usual complaints as to lack of protection; *Glasgow Mercury*, 3-10 January, 2 May, 4 June and 21 June 1782.



departure of the Dutch fleet from the Texel.<sup>89</sup> The eventual clash of the two navies on Doggar Bank was a slugging match which failed to produce a victor.

### **The Scottish letter of marque fleet during the American War**

Beyond home waters the Scottish marine was embroiled in a war of attrition against the marines of the major maritime European nations, with the notable exception of Portugal. British letters of marque were first issued against Spain in June 1779 and Holland in December 1780. By this later date Russia had led Sweden and the Baltic States into forming the 'League of Armed Neutrality' (August 1780).

Given such an array of enemies it is understandable that the number of Scottish vessels sailing under letters of marque greatly exceeded those of previous wars. Over the entire war period the Scottish ports sent out 234 letter of marque ships and privateers (40,146 tons) - the great majority (33,861 tons) from the two upper Clyde ports.<sup>90</sup> The latter numbered around thirty-eight cutters and brigantines from a cross-section of Scotland's ports. Shortly after the entry of France into the war, the Carron Company enthused over the 2,000 cannons, 'many of them large calibre', acquired by the Glasgow and Greenock owners as indicative of their 'greater lustre' to investment in armed vessels and privateers.<sup>91</sup> By 1780 virtually every large hull contracted as a transport or victualler or deployed as a running ship in the Atlantic had joined the few dedicated smaller privateers in the hunt for prizes.

The entry of the Dutch into the war that year (December ) inspired a short but intense bout of privateering ventures at the Scottish ports; 'never was the spirit of privateering at such a pitch as at present, all Lloyd's coffee-house is in a ferment and

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid, 16 May 1782. *HMS Winchelsea* took a Dunkirk privateer (12 guns) off Aberdeen Bay whilst shadowing the Dutch fleet.

<sup>90</sup> PRO HCA 26 Port Glasgow - 117 vessels (20,947 tons); Greenock - 78 vessels (12,914 tons).

<sup>91</sup> Pamphlet 'Carronades' published by the Carron Company in December 1778 as quoted by; R.H. Campbell, *The Carron Company* (Edinburgh, 1961), preface. Scottish vessels had been allowed to defensively arm themselves as for January 1776 - which attracted a premium from the Navy Board.



every vessel that can swim upon the water for twenty-four hours is expedited for a cruise'.<sup>92</sup> The mania swept through a number of the outlying ports - Ayr, Irvine, Aberdeen, Perth, Kincardine, Carronshore and Dunbar - where a diverse range of local merchants and professionals were lured to speculate by the potentially dazzling prospects of raiding the Dutch marine.<sup>93</sup> The mania was short-lived however as evident in the dramatic reduction in advertisements selling cutters and 'sharp' hulled vessels 'suitable as a privateer' by early summer 1781.

The numbers of prizes taken by Scottish vessels during this war can never be satisfactorily ascertained as most (prior to 1781) were taken in American and Caribbean waters and condemned by the Vice Admiralty courts at Halifax, New York, Barbados and Jamaica.<sup>94</sup> Furthermore, the reports of prize-taking in British newspapers are unreliable as the recapture rate was high. The impression given however is the number of prizes safely brought into harbour fell well short of the number of Scottish vessels lost to enemy cruisers.<sup>95</sup> This was not, of course, a trade-off of like-for-like as some prizes taken by Scottish privateers were large and valuable while many Scottish losses were small coasters and busses.<sup>96</sup>

Towards the end of the war however the government sought to exploit its regained naval superiority and the high rate of re-capture to prohibit British masters from accepting ransom (1 June 1782); on pain of a £500 fine and the nullification of the

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<sup>92</sup> *Glasgow Mercury*, 25 December 1780.

<sup>93</sup> At Dunbar a £25 pounds per shareholder subscription was opened to fit-out two privateers - *Thistle* (60 tons/ 35 men ) sent to West Indies and New York and *Prince of Wales* (325 tons/ 45 men) Greenland whaler; *Glasgow Mercury*, 30 December 1780. and PRO HCA 26, letters 8 February and 17 March 1781.

<sup>94</sup> Little documentation has survived from these courts. Occasionally a vessel captured off North America was brought home. An example is the sale at Greenock of the *Achilles* (200 tons) formerly an 'American cruiser'; *Glasgow*, 28 June 1781.

<sup>95</sup> Barritt's study of the newspapers found forty-four prize reports ' but I cannot claim the least accuracy for this figure; ' The navy and the Clyde', p. 35.

<sup>96</sup> As late as 1790 thirty-nine ex-prizes - mostly in the larger hull ranges - were registered to Scottish owners; PRO Customs 17, Scottish fleet as of September 1790. This not to say that any or all of these vessels were taken by Scottish privateers.



ransom bill.<sup>97</sup> This was intended to weaken the effectiveness of enemy cruisers by forcing them to deplete their complements on prize crews.<sup>98</sup>

### **The pressing of seamen during the war**

The general press was introduced in June 1777 and by the spring of the following year an exceedingly 'hot' press was operating in the Clyde which caused all but exempted seamen to flee to the safety of the hinterland. By March 1778 a bounty payment was being offered by the Glasgow magistrates to any seaman who voluntarily presented himself to the Regulating Officer at Port Glasgow or Greenock to serve on the guard ships. Although regularly re-advertised throughout the war, such inducements rapidly lost their appeal as Clyde masters desperate for crewmen offered signing-on gratuities and high wages or dangled the lure of prize money when recruiting for a privateering venture.<sup>99</sup> So much so that the magistrates' bounty offer of 30 June 1779 failed to entice a single man to come forward which forced them to double the bounty - to three guineas for seamen and two for landmen - that September.<sup>100</sup>

In December 1780, when the privateering mania was at its height, the government was forced to compete for able-bodied men by promising that the allocation of naval prize money in future would match that of a privateer.<sup>101</sup> By whatever means, inducement or press-gang, the numbers of men taken by the navy were high enough to drive up seamen's wages fourfold.<sup>102</sup>

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97 Act 22 Geo. III, c.25, as reported in *Glasgow Mercury*, 16 May 1782.

98 By accepting a ransom bill the captured vessel had a forty-day immunity in which to make a friendly harbour. The practice was resumed in the war against Revolutionary France.

99 Devine, 'Transport Problems.', pp. 289-91.

100 The bounty was usually on offer over a three month period; 12 March 1778, 30 June and 7 July 1779, 5 April and 19 October 1781 and 11 July 1782; *Glasgow Records*, VII, pp. 521, 556-7 and, VIII, pp. 6, 27 and 51.

101 *Glasgow Mercury*, 30 December 1780.

102 The west coast fisheries were particularly vulnerable as Campbeltown lost 900 men to the navy, the island of Tiree 120 youths and Saltcoats 200 men; *OSA*, Parishes of Campbeltown, X, p. 59; Tiree, X, p.405; and Stevenston, VI, p. 614,



## The Carron Company fleet and the impact of the carronade

The most readily identifiable fleet of letter of marque vessels under a common ownership was that serving the Carron Ironworks, Scotland's only international manufacturer of consequence in the eighteenth century. The formation of this fleet was in direct response to the first appearance of American cruisers in northern waters (1777). The government, mindful of the previous year's losses of military equipment to the enemy, commanded the company not to hire poorly-armed local vessels to ship their cannons abroad. In complying with this order they purchased an old Thames-built ship (250 tons) which they re-named - *King of Spain* of Bo'ness - and heavily armed with eighteen eighteen-pounder carriage guns and six swivels.<sup>103</sup> Her substantial crew of thirty-six men was considered sufficient to deter most privateers on her regular run to Ferrol where she normally delivered up to three hundred iron cannon (ranging from three to twenty-four pounders) per passage to the Spanish arsenal. With the entry of Spain into the war (June 1779) she was re-named - *Earl of Dunmore* - after the company's benefactor in London and switched to running to St. Petersburg and New York. On these highly dangerous voyages she was mounting an additional six cannons served by further fourteen crewmen.<sup>104</sup>

Whilst this company ship continued to sail to the overseas markets, an additional fleet of armed vessels was required to convey ordnance and munitions to Carron Wharf, London. The domestic market for Carron's array of lightweight cannons (bored by the Wilkinson method) had soared after January 1776 when the Navy Board introduced a premium on armed vessels and British privateers were unleashed (August 1778). This latter event coincided with the Ordnance Board acceptance of the 'carronade' for the

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<sup>103</sup> PRO, HCA 26 , letters 29 April, 4 July 1777 and 18 June 1779. Her owners were : James, Samuel and Francis Garbett; Benjamin Roebuck; John Adam of Edinburgh; John Minyer of Gray's Inn; and Charles Gascoigne, the manager of Carron.

<sup>104</sup> She was later sold and re-named - the *William* -for a voyage from London to New York; *Lloyd's Registers* of 1778-81.



navy. By December 1778 the company could boast that they had sold 5,000 cannon since 1776.<sup>105</sup>

To supply the rapidly expanding domestic market the semi-autonomous 'Carron Shipping Company' of Carronshore was founded by the Rt. Hon. Captain William Elphinstone, a kinsman of Gascoigne. The first of his small fleet of five - *Carron* (200 tons) - was equipped with the prototype eighteen-pounder carronade (autumn 1778) prior to their general release. Over the next two years he acquired and armed, in a like manner, a further four vessels - *Stirling*, *Paisley*, *Glasgow* and *Forth*. These company vessels ran, singly or in pairs, independent of convoy every ten days (weather permitting) from Carronshore to London via Leith. Well-armed and with a large crew, not one of these vessels was lost to the enemy. Their shipping agents at Glasgow, Leith and London capitalised on their aura of security by advertising passage on reduced terms for 'all mariners, recruiting parties, soldiers on furlow and all other steerage passengers who have been accustomed to the use of fire arms.'<sup>106</sup> This sort of marketing in wartime apparently proved successful as a smaller independent firm - the 'Sea Lock Shipping Company' - was formed in 1781 and ran a packet service on the same route and offering similar terms to passengers.<sup>107</sup>

Early in 1782 Elphinstone sold out to the ironworks company in order to pursue his privateering interests which had been inspired by the successes of his brig *Paisley* (200 tons).<sup>108</sup> His five vessels thereafter joined the *Lady Charlotte* (20 eighteen-pounders) - the replacement for the *Earl of Dunmore* - to create a 'Carron Company' fleet.<sup>109</sup>

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105 'Carronades' as quoted by Campbell, *The Carron Company*, p. 91.

106 The reduced single passage charge was 10/6d; *Glasgow Mercury*, 5 March 1779.

107 Ibid, advertisement for sailing of their packet *Sea Lock* (18 x six-pounders); 27 December 1781.

108 Ibid, successive reports; prizes were *Frederica* bound for Bordeaux with hemp and cordage (January 1780); a 500 ton naval stores Dutchman (taken December 1780); and a Russian ship (February 1781). She also had a brush with the American privateer *Arlington* (April 1781) which rescued a number of coasters from certain capture,

109 Anonymous, *Carron Company* (Falkirk, 1959), p. 27. By then the navy had 429 vessels carrying carronades.



Carron Ironworks made a range of cannons but it is its innovating carronade that commands attention as it was lightweight construction but still propelled a heavy shot at relatively low velocity. With such weaponry available to the average sized merchantmen the 'close-and-board' tactic, previously used by the more aggressive privateers, quickly came to an end. The master of the Greenock privateer *Hawke* (140 tons burthen/ 70 men) testified to the destructive force of his carronades on the hulls of two French privateers; 'we sent our twelve and eighteen-pounder carronades [balls] through both sides' during a three hour engagement in July 1779.<sup>110</sup> Thereafter reports of a successful defence by carronades alone quickly dry up as the enemy privateers learned to stand-off from a potential prize until its defences were known. This, in turn, caused the masters of Scottish running ships, particularly those heading for West Indian waters, to re-equip with a mixed of short-ranged carronades and a few stand-off 'long' six or nine pounders during the following year.<sup>111</sup>

### **The impact of American raiders effect of the war on regional shipping activity**

Under the combined assault of American and French raiders in foreign and home waters after August 1778 the level of shipping activity at the Scottish ports had slumped by a half.<sup>112</sup> The regional experiences however varied greatly with those heavily engaged in the coastal trades to the south and enjoying the protection of shore batteries or guard ships fairing the best.

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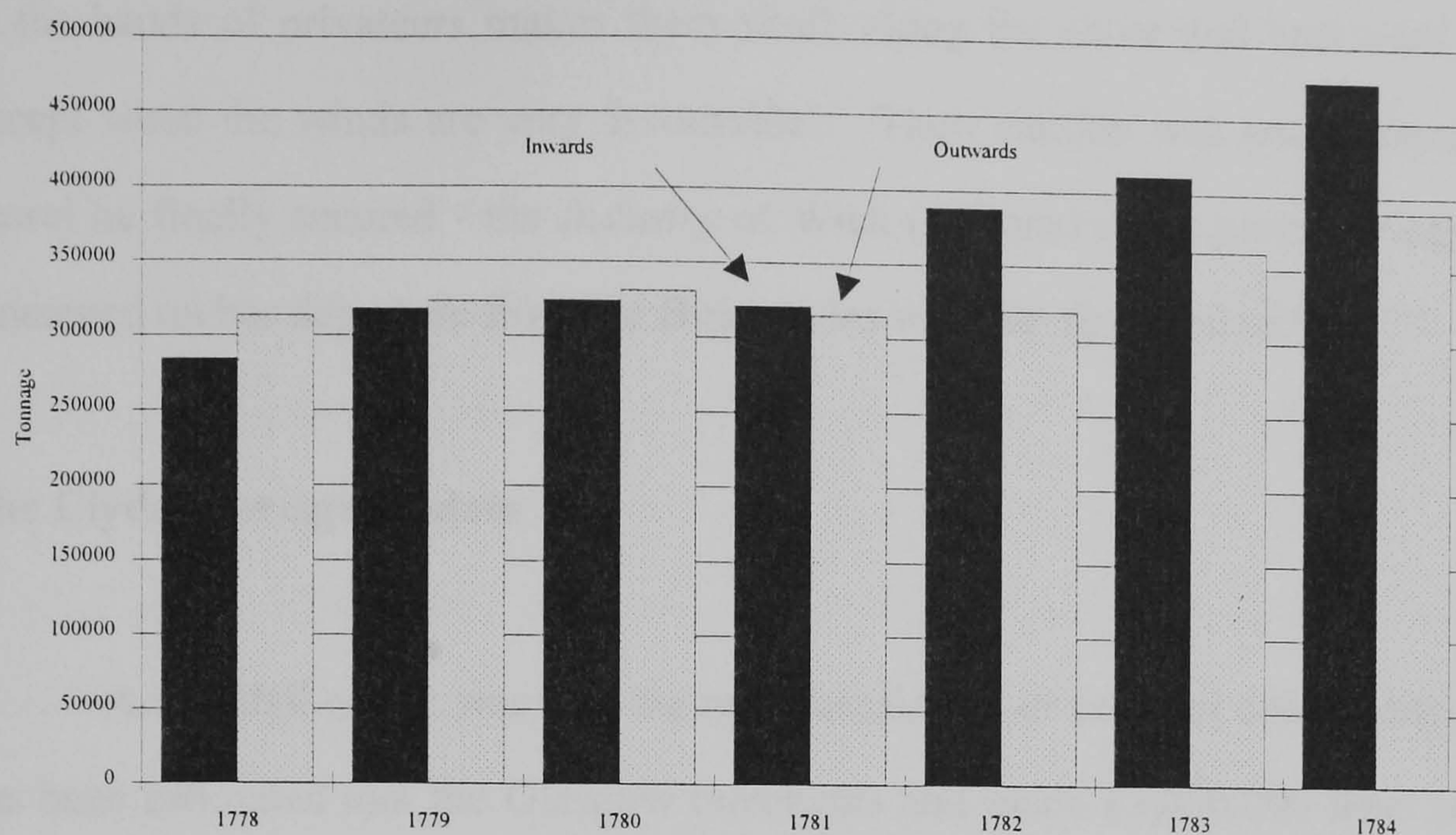
<sup>110</sup> Ibid, 26 August 1779. She had up-gunned since her first letter of marque (18 x six and three-pounders, six cohorns (four pound shot)/ six swivels) On this cruise she took the large snow *La Nymphe* from Cape Francios to Bordeaux with sugar and cotton valued at £10,000. On her next cruise she took the *Lively* of Newbury heading for Guadaloupe and the *Jolly Tar* bound from Piscataqua to St Martins with lumber. . The *Hawke* was subsequently wrecked off Bermuda; SRO E504/15/03-1, *Glasgow Mercury*, 28 October 1779, 25 August 1780 and *Lloyd's Lists*, 15 June 1781.

<sup>111</sup> This change is evident in the armament details given in new letter of marque declarations against the Dutch; PRO HCA 26, December 1780 onwards.

<sup>112</sup> In 1774 incoming foreign trade amounted to 103,078 tons and from Ireland 42,163 tons; PRO T64/251.



Table: 7.1 Inwards and outward tonnage through the Scottish ports 1778-1784



Source: GUL MSS GEN 1075

On the much-troubled west coast only the Irvine precinct - the centre of the Ayrshire coal trade to Ireland - maintained its level of shipping activity throughout the war. On the east coast the high volume ports of the inner Firths of Forth and Tay - Alloa, Bo'ness (which included Carronshore), Dundee and Perth - positively flourished. Leith, as the seaport to the centre of administration also sustained, by and large, its level of activity during the war years. By way of contrast the tonnage passing in and out of the ports of the outer firths and an undefended stretch of the coastline contracted further after 1778 - by as much as half again in the case of Ayr, Montrose, Dunbar, the Solway and Western Isles ports.<sup>113</sup>

The slow recovery of shipping activity in and out of the Scottish ports suffered a reversal in 1781, the year of Fall's raid. The Western Isles and Highlands, being without adequate defence or the legal right to arm themselves, suffered the most. The Edinburgh merchant John Inglis struggled to hire a vessel to run from Lewis to Liverpool with the product of the island's kelping for that year (seventy-four tons of ash) as it was 'so difficult to get shipping on any terms in these hazardous times'.<sup>114</sup> The few

<sup>113</sup> Port book of Ayr as quoted by Graham, *Port of Ayr*, p. 30.

<sup>114</sup> SRO, GD 427/134/1, John Inglis to George Gillander of Highfield, 6 June 1781.



masters who could be contracted, he lamented, were unreliable as 'their dread of falling in the hands of privateers makes them skulk along the shoar and backward in sailing except when the winds are very favourable'. Their caution was not unfounded as the vessel he finally secured - the *Industry* of Wick (44 tons) - was promptly captured and ransomed on her departure from the Birkin Isles with her first load of kelp.<sup>115</sup>

### The Clyde's foreign traders

A windfall of the war was the rapid escalation of colonial commodity prices. It has been estimated that the Glasgow merchants had made £5,000,000 from selling off their stockpile of tobacco to the Continent during the early years of the war when prices soared.<sup>116</sup> The conveyance of this stock to France before August 1778 was a boon to the larger vessels left on the Clyde. An example was the privateer *Cochrane* of Port Glasgow (240 tons) which delivered a cargo of tobacco to Bordeaux for William Cunninghame & Co., in September 1777, before crossing the Atlantic to cruise for American prizes.<sup>117</sup> By 1780 however prices had dropped and the re-export trade to Holland lost to British shipping. The Americans were then eluding British cruisers to deliver tobacco directly to Europe 'in small fleets of ten to thirty ships generally armed and well manned ... and it is remarkable that only two have been captured in the year 1780.'<sup>118</sup>

By 1778 the high wartime prices commanded by West Indies sugar and its products had dropped as refineries retained stocks as a buffer against wartime

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid, items 8,9 and 11. She was taken by the *Fly* of Dunkirk, commanded by yet another 'Captain Fall'

<sup>116</sup> In August 1776 the Collector of Customs concluded that between the two ports, forty-one companies held a stockpile in excess of fourteen millions pounds of tobacco. The price of which had doubled from 3d to 6d in a matter of days and would reach 3/6d a short time later; GCA, CE60/1/9 Collector of Port Glasgow and Greenock to the Board, 10 August 1776.

<sup>117</sup> PRO HCA 26, letters 23 September 1777. She took three American vessels in the following months including one with a cargo valued at £100,000; *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, 7 November 1778.

<sup>118</sup> *Glasgow Mercury*, 14 September 1780.



fluctuations in supply.<sup>119</sup> Over the next three years much of the carrying trade to and from the West Indies was lost as the French captured the British sugar isles - with the exception of Jamaica and Antigua.<sup>120</sup> Under the favourable terms of surrender British property on the captured isles had been left untouched and free to export but only in neutral bottoms. Furthermore, the British capture of the Dutch isle of St. Eustatius (February 1781) struck at Scotland's illegal trade to the West Indies. This six-mile long 'nest of villains' had long served as a conduit to the French West Indies for smuggled Scottish goods. Rodney's sequestration of the island therefore, along with over one hundred and fifty vessels in the harbour, caused the greatest chagrin to the West Indies merchants.<sup>121</sup>

As overseas markets closed the tonnage entering and leaving the Atlantic-oriented upper Clyde ports had dipped by one-sixth between 1779 and 1781.<sup>122</sup> A contributory factor was the continuing drain on the remaining stock of larger vessels from the Scottish ports to the war effort; 'this day (April 1780) orders arrived at Edinburgh immediately to engage in the service of the government all ships of 200 tons and upwards. Various are the conjectures as to the reason for these orders.'<sup>123</sup> One certain reason was the increasingly unfavourable terms of contracting with the Navy Board. Indeed, the Board was forced to promise to re-emburse a month's wages for the crew of any vessel sailing south to London or Plymouth for contractual measurement.<sup>124</sup> The months following the entry of the Dutch into the war (December 1780) marked the

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<sup>119</sup> In December 1777 the leading West Indies merchant Alexander Houston wrote to his factor in St. Vincent advising him not to over-commit as 'sugars have been almost unsaleable these six weeks'; National Library of Scotland, Letter books of Alexander Houston & Co., Foreign Letter Book E, p. 336.

<sup>120</sup> Dominica (1778) St. Lucia (1778), Grenada and St. Vincent (1779) Kitts, Monserrat and Nevis (1780). Scottish transports were heavily committed in the supplying the garrisons on these isles. The defeat of the French fleet at the 'Battle of the Saints' (February 1782) saved Jamaica and Antigua.

<sup>121</sup> 3182 vessels visited that island in the space of thirteen months during the war; T. A. Bailey *A diplomatic history of the American People* (New York, 1964), p. 41.

<sup>122</sup> Greenock was then handling twice the tonnage of Port Glasgow.

<sup>123</sup> *Glasgow Mercury*, 24 April 1780. A number of the whalers were contracted at this time, e.g., the *Leith* whaler leaving Leith as a transport; *Lloyd's Register* 1780.

<sup>124</sup> All vessels contracted by the Navy Board had to be inspected at a royal dockyard.: Syrett, *Shipping in the American War*, p. 107-8.

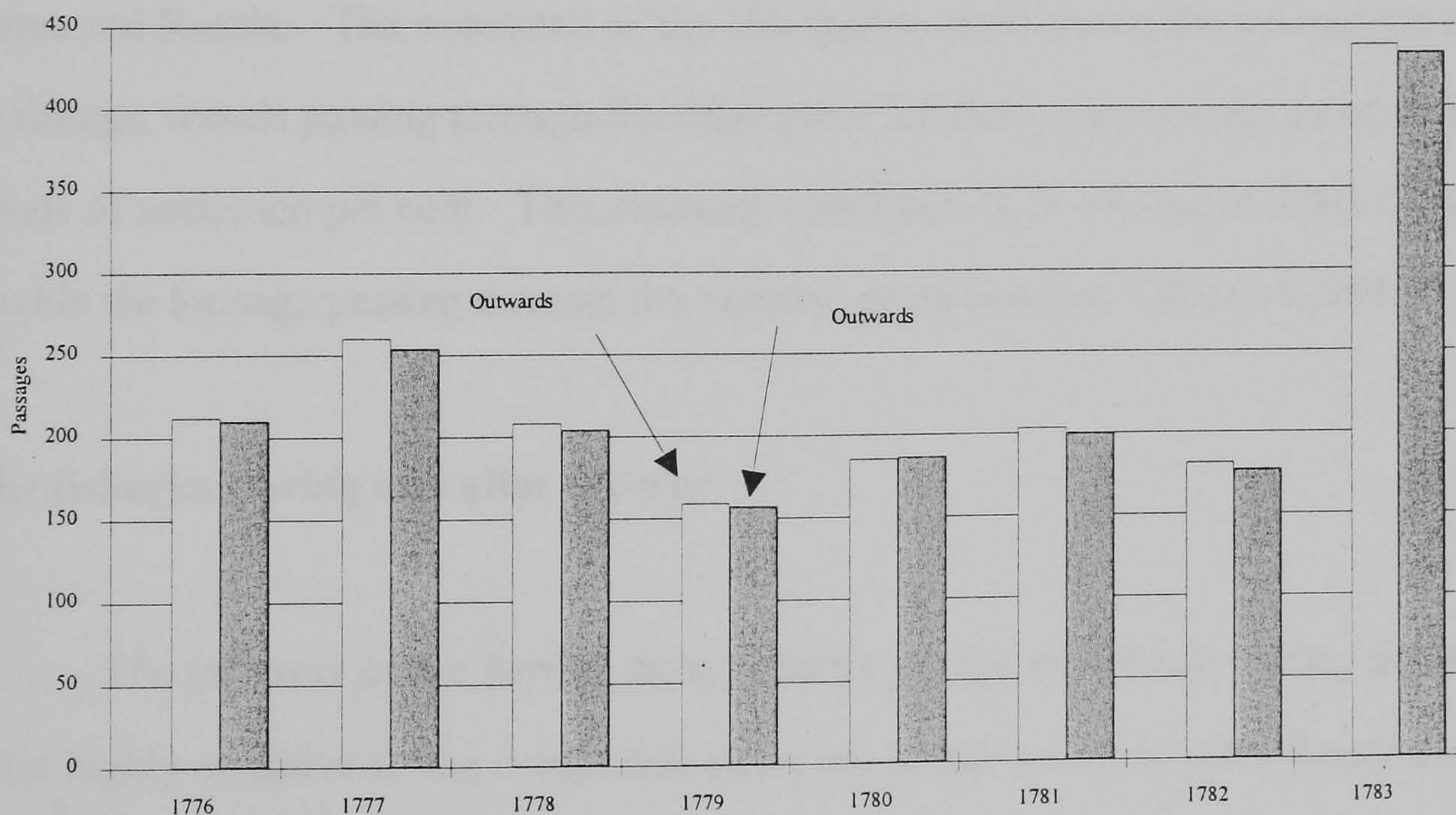


lowest point in shipping activity as the last swarm of privateers departed for West Indian and Iberian waters in search of Dutch merchantmen.

### The Baltic Trades

The number of passages made by Scottish masters through the Baltic Sound had halved with the arrival of American cruisers in the North Sea (1776). Any recovery was forestalled by, firstly, the entry of France (1778) and, secondly, the formation of the League of Armed Neutrality (1780-83). British naval supremacy however kept the Baltic open to British convoys whilst virtually wiping out the Dutch presence in the area after 1780 which ensured that the League was little more than an 'armed nullity'. Indeed, it is notable that it was during the war that the centre of the timber trade to Scotland markedly switched from Norway to the eastern Baltic ports of Prussia and Russia.<sup>125</sup>

Table: 7.2 Passages made by Scottish domiciled masters through the Danish Sound 1776-83



Source: Danish Sound Tolls

<sup>125</sup> The accessible prime standings of timber suitable for shipbuilding on the Norwegian coast had been steadily depleted since the 1750s. The Finnish forests under Russian control were prohibited from exporting baulk timber.



## **The end of hostilities**

The war on the American mainland had been effectively lost in September 1781 when De Grasse's fleet slipped into the Chesapeake cutting the supply line to Cornwallis at Yorktown. In April 1782 the Prime Minister in-waiting, Lord Shelborne, dispatched the Scottish merchant Richard Oswald to Paris to open the negotiations with his old acquaintance Benjamin Franklin. His mission was to extract Britain from her position of being 'foolishly involved in four wars'. After much posturing a 'preliminary' peace treaty was signed (30 November 1782) which ended hostilities. By then a quarter of all foreign-going tonnage inwards and a fifth outwards from the Scottish ports had been carried by foreign bottoms.

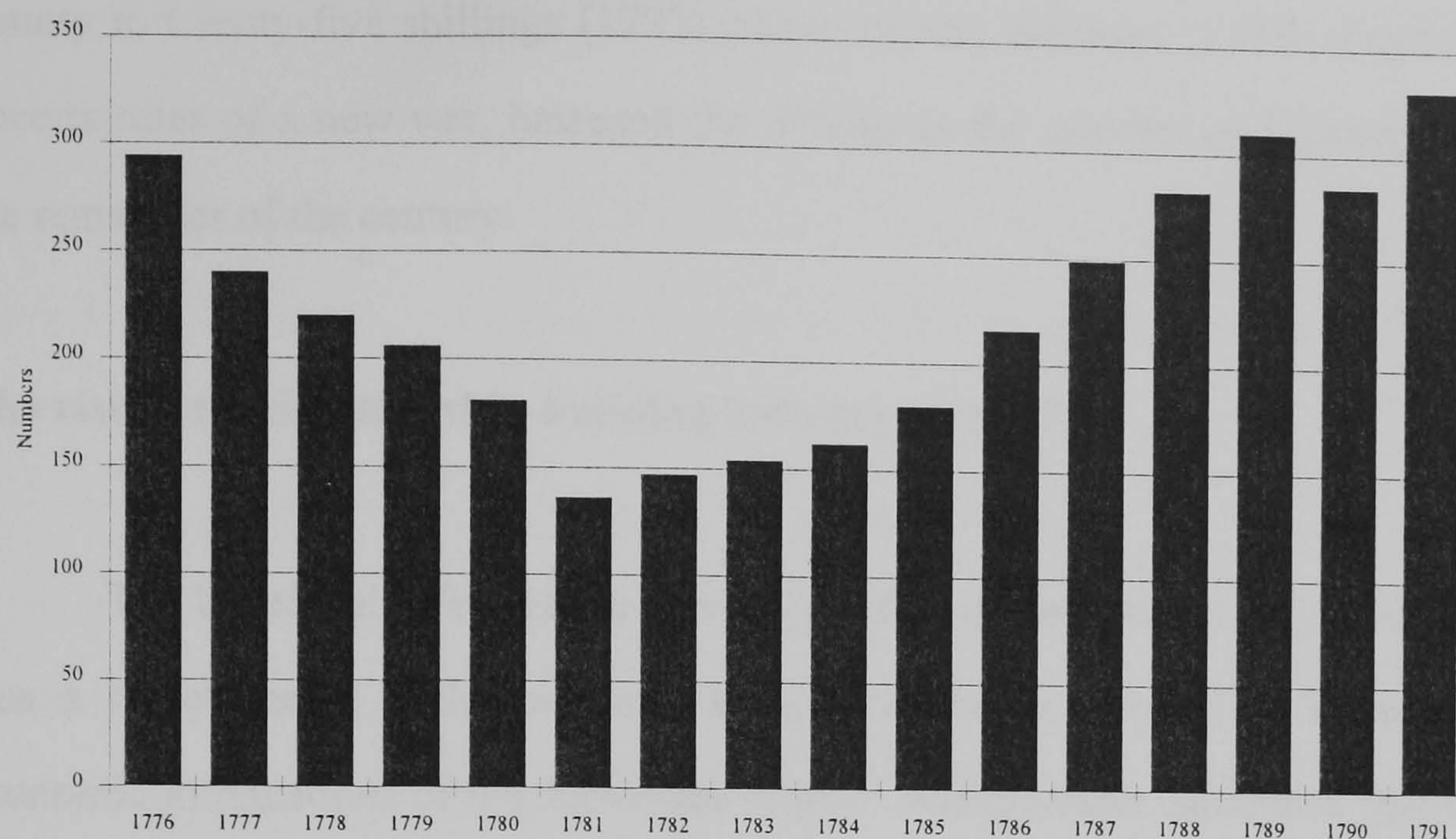
The independence of the American colonies was formally recognised by the Treaty of Versailles the following year (3 September 1783). In the interim, the recovery of Scotland's overseas trade got underway; albeit with a switch of emphasis in European trading from the France and the Low Countries to northern Europe, the Baltic states and Russia. The reinstated of the Navigation Acts hasten the pace as the number of foreign vessels passing through Scottish ports fell back dramatically towards pre-war levels of under ten per cent. This recovery combined with a surge in coastal trading to double the tonnage passing through the Scottish ports between 1782 and 1784.<sup>126</sup>

## **The fisheries during and after the war**

The progress of the herring buss industry on the west coast during the war had been highly sensitive to the compound effect of; security scares, press-gangs and wage inflation. During the war years the number of Scottish herring busses claiming the bounty dropped by over a half, bottoming in 1781.



Table: 7.3 Numbers of Scottish herring busses claiming the bounty 1776-91



Source: J. Knox, *View of the British Empire*, Vol.1. 'Report on the Herring Fisheries 1798 (Bigwood)

After the war new moves were made to attract new promoters to the fisheries with Leith, Inverness, Stranraer and Oban added to the list of ports at which bounty vouchers were validated. Finally, in 1787, the old restrictions on hull size and fitting-out requirements were dropped to allow any size of vessel to claim the herring bounty. At the same time half the bounty was transferred to the catch - 'barrel bounty' - to link payment with productivity.

The fortunes of the Scottish whaling industry revived with the restoration of the tonnage bounty to forty shillings in 1782 and the release of whalers from government contract. This financial incentive, along with the absence of the American whaling fleet during the war (many transferred to the British flag afterwards) and high oil prices sustained by rising domestic demand, maintained the Greenland whaling interest in the northern ports after the war. In 1788, at the height of this second wave of bounty whaling ventures, thirty-one Scottish whalers were fitted out, despite the drop in the bounty to thirty shillings per ton the previous year. This boom was however over by 1789 as the increasing availability of cheaper oil from the south seas reduced the



importance of the Arctic whalers in the eyes of the Board of Trade. Cuts in the tonnage bounty to twenty-five shillings (1793) and to twenty shillings (1796) coupled with the uncertainties of a new war, hastened the decline in the number of Scottish whalers for the remainder of the century.

### **The rise of the Scottish ship-building industry after 1775**

The beneficial effect of the loss of America on the British shipbuilding industry was a major theme with contemporary commentators anxious to quantify the full economic implications of the American War.<sup>127</sup> Macpherson calculated that two-thirds by number (half by tonnage) of the pre-war British marine was American built.<sup>128</sup> By the end of the war this element, including prizes and vessels brought across by American loyalists to re-flag as British, had reduced to a third on both counts.<sup>129</sup>

The composition the Scottish marine would appear to have mirrored Macpherson's findings as half the Scottish tonnage prior to 1783 (c.43,400 tons) was American-built.<sup>130</sup> They numbered some 263 vessels (one-third of the marine) and constituted the vast majority of over-150 tons vessels in the foreign-going category.<sup>131</sup> The remaining half of Scotland's tonnage (two-thirds by number) consisted mainly of locally-built busses, sloops and brigs serving the fisheries and coastal trades.

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<sup>127</sup> Examples are; Lord Sheffield's *Observations on the commerce of the American States* and George Chalmers *Opinions on interesting subjects of public law and commercial policy arising from American Independence*, both published c.1783.

<sup>128</sup> Macpherson's survey was based on the *Lloyd's Registers* 1773-5 that have since been lost to fire; *Commerce*, III, p.11. It is therefore not possible to emulate his survey to isolate the American component in the Scottish marine for the same period.

<sup>129</sup> Since the Prize Act (1747) vessels condemned in a British Vice Admiralty Court were deemed to be 'British' for the purposes of the Navigation Acts.

<sup>130</sup> Tonnage in this case is a high variation of 'tons burthen', see Appendix A. The flaws in attempting to isolate every Scottish vessel listed in *Lloyd's Register* beyond 1782 are the rapid turn-over in ownership (which effectively creates a new population of vessels) and the dispersal of Scottish-owned hulls to other British ports (principally Liverpool and London) after this date.

<sup>131</sup> A rare example was the Virginiaman *Paxulent*, built originally for William Cunninghame & Co., later described as 'Scottish built' at change of owner from Glassford & Co., to Hogg & Co.; *Lloyd's Register* 1780.



At the start of the war Scotland was a minor shipbuilding region by contemporary British standards. The Scottish-built vessels listed in *Lloyd's Register* for 1776 accounted for slightly under ten per cent by number (323 vessels) or just over five per cent by tonnage (26,195 tons) of the total British-built marine.<sup>132</sup> Leith was still the centre of the industry, a position sustained by the construction of two small dry docks by the shipbuilders John Sime Senior and Robert Dryburgh in the early to mid-1770s. The range of skills available at the Leith yards extended from building herring busses to the occasional 200 ton brig for the mercantile interest. Dryburgh's yard even succeeded in meeting the rigorous requirements of the customs service to build their cutters. Naval repair work had been undertaken for the Admiralty since the time of the 'Old Scots navy' but the first contract to build a warship was not won until 1778 - the sloop *HMS Fury* (launched 1780).<sup>133</sup>

During the American War however virtually every Scottish port of consequence supported a yard capable of repairing, lengthening and occasionally building fishing boats and small traders. The port of Saltcoats demonstrates this dynamic effect of the war on a local economy:

The Saltcoats people finding an increasing demand for ships, which they could not build in America, nor buy at the time in Britain but at a high price, were naturally led to attempt to build them themselves, their harbour being remarkably convenient for launching them ... in a place where scarce a boat had been built before three carpenter's yards were set up one after the other, which have gone on successfully ever since. <sup>134</sup>

Between 1775-90, the seventy odd carpenters at the Saltcoats yards produced sixty-four vessels (7,095 tons) comprising of: six ships from 160 to 220 tons (1,155 tons); thirty-

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<sup>132</sup> J.A. Goldenberg, 'An analysis of shipbuilding sites in *Lloyd's Register* of 1776', *Mariner's Mirror*, Vol.59, (1973) pp. 419-433

<sup>133</sup> The contract was awarded to John Sime the younger after he acquired the Sandport yard from Dryburgh; Mowat, *Leith* pp. 238-241.

<sup>134</sup> *OSA*, Parish of Stevenston, VI, pp. 598-9.



seven brigs from 55 to 180 tons (4,630 tons); eighteen sloops from 20 to 85 tons (1,085 tons); and three smaller vessels on the stocks (225 tons). The larger hulls required a spring tide to be slipped.<sup>135</sup> The raw materials were imported in the form of an annual cargo of hemp from St. Petersburg or Riga, a consignment of bar iron from Gothenburg, three cargoes of spar and mast timber from Memel and as many deliveries of oak planking as acquired from South Wales.

The year 1778 appears to have triggered new ventures in ship-building activity in the Forth. In that year Kirkcaldy opened its first yard eventually building thirty-eight hulls (3,000 tons) by 1791.<sup>136</sup> At Dysart a new additional yard opened in 1778 which employed around forty-five men. By 1791 the combined output of the two Dysart yards had surpassed Saltcoats tonnage by launching seventy-four vessels (8,634 tons).<sup>137</sup> Charges for the hulls built at these yards were between half to two-thirds of the total cost of a rigged vessel outfitted for sea and were around one-third cheaper than that of a comparable 'river' [Thames] built hull.<sup>138</sup>

After the war the search for shipbuilding timber to replace the American source continued. To the fore in the exploitation of accessible Scottish forests was a substantial operation spearheaded in 1785 by the 'English Company of Garmouth' at the mouth of the River Spey. At this site one saw-mill supplied cut timber for the local shipbuilders at Aberdeen and the north and as far as west as Skye. The other saw-mill sent prepared timber south to Hull and the naval dockyard at Deptford. The residual timber was used by twenty-eight shipwrights and blockmakers on site to build twenty-three vessels

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135 The principal shipyard of Saltcoats harbour is sketched in the Eglinton Plan Book (1789) lodged with the SRO. The immediate tidal stretch of the beach was enclosed by a gated wall. Reproduced in, Graham, *The Shipping Trade of Ayrshire*, p. 9.

136 *OSA*, Parish of Kirkcaldy, XVIII, p. 540.

137 *Ibid*, Parish of Dysart, XII, p. 513.

138 Kirkcaldy vessels were sold at £4-5/- to £6 per ton depending on size and requirements. At Saltcoats the average charge was £5 per ton.



(c.4,000 tons) over seven years. A few of their larger vessels were subsequently sent out to the Bay of Campechy region of Honduras to fetch logwood.<sup>139</sup>

By 1790 the building of hulls for general trading at the lesser Scottish ports had peaked. The principal reason for their decline was switch in demand to much larger vessels, partly driven by changes in legislation. After the Act of Registration (1786) the growing demand was for deeper draught hulls that could exploit the inherent flaw in tonnage 'formula 1775' used in the Act to measure vessels for duty purposes. As a result the Greenock and Port Glasgow yards, with their direct access to a deep channel, launched double the tonnage of their Leith competitors in the four years after 1786.<sup>140</sup> A milestone was reached in 1791 with the launch of the 1100 ton ship *Brunswick* at Greenock which marked the step-up to building large ocean-going square-riggers on the upper Clyde.<sup>141</sup> The master shipwrights responsible for this leap in technology were part of a general drift of skills and talent from the lesser ports to the deep-water ports. The most notable arrivals at Greenock were the Saltcoats' master-shipwrights - Robert Steele and his partner John Carswell in 1796.<sup>142</sup>

Whilst such men looked to the future, the smaller decked vessels of the buss class (twenty to eighty tons) remained the mainstay of the Scottish shipbuilding industry during the last years of the bounty system in the herring fisheries and the rapid expansion of the coastal trades, particularly in coal and grain. In the year before the launch of the *Brunswick*, the Scottish yards built 106 vessels (7,206 tons) of which sixty-six were in the buss class and only two in the 220-240 tons class. Even so, in comparative terms, the Scottish yards accounted for one in every five vessels (just over one in every eight by tons) launched in mainland Britain in that year.

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<sup>139</sup> The founders were two merchants - Dodsworth of York and Osbourne of Hull; *OSA*, Parish of Speymouth, XIV, pp. 391-5.

<sup>140</sup> PRO Customs 17/82.

<sup>141</sup> J. Wilson, *General View of the Agriculture of Renfrewshire* (Paisley 1812) p. 237. The *Brunswick* was built for a naval contract - won by a consortium of Greenock merchants - to ship masts from Nova Scotia to Deptford dockyard.

<sup>142</sup> Between 1796-1816 the company of Steele and Carswell launched twelve full-rigged ships from their new premises and were considered the finest builders on the Clyde. Another Saltcoats shipwright relocated at Belfast.



The majority of the larger hulls were sold on an increasingly international market. Saltcoats brigs were sold to buyers in England, Ireland and Spain as well as the upper Clyde ports. Over the four years 1787-90 Scottish ship builders launched vessels worth something in the region of £210,000, double when fully-rigged and canvassed, on the open-market. Ship-building was therefore a major industry (by Scottish standards) and major local employer. In 1790, for example, ship-building dominated employment in North Leith where the combined yards of the five master-builders employed 152 skilled carpenters at 1/10d per day. In crude terms each Leith carpenter turned out around eight tons of shipping per year which, if applied to the whole tonnage built in Scotland that year, would suggest that the nation supported around 900 ship's carpenters onshore around this time.<sup>143</sup> This figure would probably double if those employed in the related industries - anchor smiths, coopers, sail and rope-makers, block makers and victuallers - are added.

The shipping industry in all its manifestations was a mainstay employer of men and women around the entire Scottish coast by 1790. The manning of sea-going traders, whalers and herring busses above fifteen tons, employed just under 13,000 seamen in that year. If those employed in open boats under fifteen tons (engaged in the inshore fisheries or as ferries) were also to be considered, then the final tally of those directly engaged in or servicing maritime activities would probably approach 20,000.<sup>144</sup>

### **The changes to the mercantilist system in the aftermath of the war**

The most profound long term legacy from the American War was the restructuring of the mercantilist system. The loss of the re-export trade in colonial commodities to Europe had undermined the basic rationale behind the elaborate high-

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<sup>143</sup> *OSA*, Parish of North Leith (Edinburgh), VI, p.14.

<sup>144</sup> PRO Custom 17. The inshore estimate is based on the *OSA* reports which indicate at least 1,000 men were deployed in the Firth of Clyde fisheries while other coastal communities list open boats used in herring and white fishing as the major employer of men after agriculture.



tariffs of the old fiscal regime. First on the agenda was the urgent need to curb entrenched smuggling, the extent of which had spiralled upwards at the outlying precincts under the distractions of war.<sup>145</sup> In 1783 the House of Commons set up a committee to deliberate on 'smuggling and other illicit practices' under the existing system. As a result Pitt was empowered to experiment with a massive reduction in the import duty on tea, the highest valued smuggled commodity, as a means to undercut the profitability of 'the trade'. The Commutation Act (1784) subsequently reduced the import duty on tea from 112% to 25% and had an immediate and desired effect; to the extent of being dubbed 'the burning and starving Act' in the principal smuggling areas of Kirkcudbrightshire and Galloway.<sup>146</sup> It took a further three years to rationalise and codify the myriad of customs legislation passed since William and Mary (the Consolidation Act) before legislation (containing 173 sections by 1789) could complete the process of removing the prime financial incentives to smuggling.<sup>147</sup> Heading this list was a dramatic reduction on the duty on imported spirits, the loss in revenue being made up by an increase in the excise duty on domestic whisky distilling. The option of warehousing imported goods destined for re-export, thereby avoiding the need to pay domestic duty, was finally introduced at the three remaining nominated ports - Leith, Port Glasgow and Greenock.<sup>148</sup>

Pitt's free trade tendencies went no further in dismantling the system as Chalmers (on the Committee of Trade), Irving (Customs) and Jenkinson (Board of Trade) were ardent supporters of the Navigation Acts. As Lord Sheffield's highly influential pamphlet *Observations on the commerce of the American States* (1783) resolutely declared:

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<sup>145</sup> Many of the letters of marque taken out by small cutters at the outlying ports were simply a cover for a heavily armed smuggler; an example was the *Greyhound* cutter of Ayr (50 tons/ 4 guns/ 35 men) owned by the Ayr branch of the Breckenbridge family of smugglers; PRO HCA 26, letter 13 January 1781.

<sup>146</sup> Mossner, *The correspondence of Adam Smith*, p. 411.

<sup>147</sup> Act 13 Geo. III, c.68.

<sup>148</sup> To deter sharp practice the minimum size of vessel allowed to carry tobacco was raised to 120 tons. Furthermore the shipping of tobacco off-cuts such as stalks and its derivative snuff was prohibited and the minimum weight of parcel of compressed leaf legally imported was set at 450 lb. The 'Hovering Act' was also reinforced at this time.



The great object of the Navigation Act is naval strength: its sacrifices commercial speculation to strengthen our marine. It is the basis of our great power at sea, and gave us the trade of the world: if we alter that Act, by permitting any state to trade with our islands, or by suffering any state to bring any produce but its own, we desert the navigation Act and sacrifice the marine of England [Britain].

Indeed, Eden's trade treaty with France (1786) must be viewed under this pre-condition as the 'free trade' conceded was only permissible under the most stringent interpretation of the British Navigation Acts. Firm action was also taken to strengthen the Acts against American vessels and masters passing themselves off as British in the Empire's carrying trade after 1783. The central device was Act of Registry (1786) which made it a legal requirement that all vessels over fifteen tons be formally certified as 'British' and registered at their home port.

Far removed from the international politics of trade but of equal significance to the general progress and direction of the Scottish economy, was the growth of her coastal trade which doubled between 1776-91.<sup>149</sup> Technological advances in mine and coal haulage on the Ayrshire coal fields allowed the coal trade to Ireland to lead the way. A further contributory factor was the abolition of 'British duty' on coal shipped coastwise beyond the customs precinct boundaries.<sup>150</sup> This latter development had a beneficial effect on Scotland's emerging manufacturing and brewing industries and on agriculture (lime burning).

The bounty on exporting grain was paid throughout the war which maintained buoyant prices and a growing overseas market.<sup>151</sup> After 25 March 1781 however such

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<sup>149</sup> From 660 vessels (25,140 tons) to 1,058 vessels (51,998 tons); GUL MSS 1075 coastal category.

<sup>150</sup> A review of technological developments at the Stevenston colliery is available in; E.J. Graham, *Robert Reid Cunninghame of Seabank House*, A.A.N.H.S. (1997) monogram 17.

<sup>151</sup> After 1771 a 'Corn Register' was kept by customs. Over the years 1771-1775 the bounty was suspended every year except 1774 whereby only £61 was paid out to Scottish claimants against £4,063 duty paid on imported grain. By way of contrast the bounty was paid every year 1775-90. During the active war years (1776-82) Scottish claimants received £29,139 bounty on grain exports against £770 duty on imported grain. Between 1783-91 the relationship between bounty and duty payments became highly erratic; though roughly balanced over the period as a whole. In 1791 the 'Corn Laws' were consolidated as part of the ongoing review. The outbreak of the French



was the scarcity of British vessels that the Navigation Acts were suspended which allowed bounty to be claimed on British grain carried in neutral bottoms.<sup>152</sup> After the war the Acts were re-imposed the effect of which, if the first Greenock Registry (1786) is to be taken as a national indicator, was that a significant number of farmers became part-owners of small sloops in the coastal and European trades.<sup>153</sup>

By 1790 the composition of the Scottish marine reflected an economy still heavily dependent on the coastal conveyance of bulk goods and commodities, subsidised fisheries and yet to venture beyond the North Atlantic in foreign trade. In that year the marine consisted of c.1,500 busses, coasters and North Sea traders under 100 tons; c.400 traders of the ocean-going class (100-300 ton) and the twenty-three whalers (300 tons and above) - in all 142,029 tons of shipping compared to England's 1,072,363 tons.<sup>154</sup> Not an insignificant element, by any standard, in the world's largest marine at that time.

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Revolutionary Wars incurred a new ban on exports and suspension of bounty payments; Macpherson, *Commerce*, iii, pp. 447-721 and iv, pp. 14-219.

<sup>152</sup> Act 20 Geo III c.30.

<sup>153</sup> Greenock was, by then, the greatest (owning 27,484 tons) and most diverse of the Scottish ports.

<sup>154</sup> PRO Customs 17, Scottish Fleet as of September 1790.



## CHAPTER VIII: AIDS TO NAVIGATION AND PORT DEVELOPMENT

The pursuit of mercantilist goals required the government and its agencies to consider the best means by which the nation's maritime assets could be safeguarded and advanced where possible. Whilst national security was the prime reason for direct government intervention in the promotion of aids to safer navigation and port development; it was well understood that the nation's prosperity lay in the safe passage and docking of vessels in home waters - in both peace and war.

### **The state-sponsored charting of the Scottish coastline**

Symptomatic of Scotland's backwardness as a maritime nation was the absence of reliable coastal charts. The home market was initially too small to support an indigenous cartography industry and so it was left to interested foreign nations to provide the first useful charts of Scotland.

The most comprehensive chart of the Scottish mainland in general circulation at the onset of the mercantilist era was that of the French royal cartographer Nicolas de Nicolay. It was first published in Paris (1583) entitled *Vraye and exacte description Hydrographique does costes maritimes d'Escosse and des Hebrides and Orchades servat a la Navigation* and used rutters or compass rosettes to give bearings. The sailing directions were based on the account of King James V's voyage round Scotland (1540). Thereafter, regional maps were produced by French, Dutch or German engravers which focused on the 'grand fisheries' sea areas - principally Orkney and Shetlands.

The first indigenous survey was undertaken sometime between 1583 and 1610 when the Rev. Timothy Pont of Dunnet undertook an arduous series of regional surveys on foot. These were used, together with Robert Gordon of Straloch's notes and



observations of Orkney and Shetlands, by Joannis Blaeu to complete his *Atlas of Scotland* (1654) which greatly improved on the position of the isles relative to the mainland.

In 1681, as part of the general assault on the nation's deplorable trading position, the Scottish Privy Council appointed the mathematician John Adair to survey Scotland. His initial two year commission gave priority to surveying the coastal areas. Adair was however distracted by financial and legal wrangles and de-motivated by the commissioning of a rival (the cartographer Robert Sibbald). To appease his paymasters he resorted to modifying older maps, notably those of Nicolay and Pont. As a consequence his first set of published charts *Mappe of Orkney* (1682), *Hydrographical Mappe of Forth* (1683) and *Firth of Clyde and Solway* (1686) were poorly received. He, in defence, bitterly complained to the Privy Council of his lack of finance and authority. The immediate outcome of this dialogue was the imposition of a levy (1686) of twelve shillings Scots on all Scottish vessels (double on foreign vessels) entering Scottish ports to finance the completion of his coastal surveys. Re-assured, Adair hired the *Mary* of Leith and a highland pilot for an expedition to the Western Isles (1698) which was closely followed by a cruise of the Firth of Clyde. Under renewed pressure to produce results he cobbled together *A Hydrographical Description of the Sea Coast and Isles of Scotland* which was engraved in Edinburgh in 1703 by a Dutchman specifically recruited by him for the task. It did little to advance the safer navigation of vessels in Scottish waters as it was, yet again, a re-work of his old surveys accompanied by the sailing instructions from King James V's voyage.<sup>1</sup>

Raising his levy to one shilling sterling per ton in 1704 only served to distract Adair further as he spent more of his time at the Scottish ports enforcing its collection. Furthermore, in 1706, his remit, as the 'Geographer of Scotland', was extended to include policing Scottish maritime jurisdiction. His new powers allowed him to seize

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<sup>1</sup> A fuller account is available in : D.G. Moir, *The Early Maps of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1973), I, pp. 65-78 and A.H.W. Robinson, 'The charting of the Scottish coast', *Scottish Geographic Magazine* (1958), 74, pp. 116-127.



'all foreign vessels found fishing in the lochs, creeks, bays and rivers of Scotland, or within sight of the shore, and secure them in safe harbours'.<sup>2</sup> The few seizures he did make involved prolonged and costly legal wrangles that kept him in Edinburgh and away from his primary mission.

After the Act of Union English vessels refused to pay his levy and as a consequence he died in penury (1718). His widow eventually extracted a pension from the Treasury (1723) in return for surrendering his portfolio of manuscript charts and journals of thirty years surveying the coast of Scotland. They were never published and were probably lost in the Exchequer fire of 1811.

Whilst the Scottish Parliament's experiment in sponsoring cartography had failed to provide the required coastal charts, based on updated soundings and sight-lines, a separate royal initiative was partly successful. This was the survey undertaken by Greenvill[e] Collins, 'hydrographer to King James II', during his cruises from Harwich to the Shetlands (1684-5). The results were published in 1689 under the misleading title *Great Britain's Coasting Pilot* as his work had been interrupted by his recall to command one of the Stuart frigates dispatched to contest William's landing at Torbay (1688). In a footnote to his charts he stated his 'hearty wish that the west part of Ireland and Scotland may hereafter be surveyed'.<sup>3</sup>

Collins' pilotage remained the only practical inshore chart of Shetland, Orkney and the east coast for almost a century. Engraved prints were generally available in Scotland by the early 1700s and regularly reprinted throughout the eighteenth century.<sup>4</sup> The durability of his work owed much to the quality of his sailing directions and inshore soundings, often acquired from local masters.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Commission dated 26 July 1706.; HCAS. AC 13, I, p.51. He was cited in a legal action involving a detained Spanish vessel shortly afterwards: *ibid*, AC9 / 380.

<sup>3</sup> G. Collins, *Great Britain's Coasting Pilot* (London, 1693).

<sup>4</sup> Editions of these charts were reprinted by a succession of London publishers in 1723, 1738, 1756 and 1785.

<sup>5</sup> A caption in the Fifeness to Montrose chart acknowledged the help of 'Mr Mar, an ingenious mariner of Dundee'.



## National security and charting the west coast

The recurring Jacobite threat to national security prompted the Admiralty to make provisions for proper charts for the navy of the remote and complex Western Isles and the West Highland coastline which had been omitted by Collins.<sup>6</sup> In 1741 an Act of Parliament gave authorisation to act but their Lordships failed to appoint an 'Admiralty Surveyor of the North' until the crisis of the '45 Rebellion was over.

This commission was finally given in 1749 to the Scottish mathematician and experienced surveyor, Murdoch McKenzie the Elder. By then, the opening up of the western fisheries was an integral part of the Government's pacification programme and so McKenzie's remit included locating and noting the inshore fishing grounds, channels, races, shoals and rocks. Delays in funding however deferred his embarkation on the newly-built naval sloop - insensitively named *Culloden* (35 tons/ 2 guns) - until 1751. After three years his commission was extended (1753-7) to include the south-west coast of Scotland and Ireland; the result of which was nineteen maps covering the area from Lewis to the Solway. His methodology was a major step forward for cartography as a science as he perfected the triangulation of a rugged coastline from a measured based line (usually a beach) and a series of specially raised beacons on the surrounding hilltops. This involved the use of a theodolite, plane table and chain loaned by the Admiralty.<sup>7</sup>

In 1776, as the first American raiders appeared off the Firth of Clyde, a highly concerned Parliament voted him a grant of £2,145 to cover the cost of engraving these charts. These were published in two volumes that year as *A maritim survey of Ireland*

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<sup>6</sup> The cost of pilotage was noted by the commander of *HMS Mermaid* after pursuing the Duke of Argyll's private warships in 1685 around Scotland. He was charged £5 sterling from the Leith to Bute, £2 between Bute and Ayr and a further £5 for his detached cruise from Argyll to Orkney; *RPC*, XI, p. xxvii.

<sup>7</sup> This technique formed the basis for his *Treatise on Marin Surveying* (1776); McPherson, *Annals*, III, p.577. The accuracy of his later maps were, unfortunately, poor in comparison with his earlier private surveys. His greatest error was to calculate the length of the Isle of Arran as fourteen not twenty miles.



*and West Coast of Great Britain*.<sup>8</sup> They did not however include the off-shore fishing banks reported by incoming Virginiamen plumb-lining their approach to landfall. To remedy this omission Captain James Huddart was instructed by the Admiralty in 1777 to take soundings off the west of Islay. In 1781 and 1789 Huddart extended his survey to the banks off the other western isles; the preliminary results of which were passed to the 'Trustees of the Fisheries, Manufacture and Improvement in Scotland'.<sup>9</sup>

The challenge to up-date Collins's old pilotage of the eastern seaboard was taken up by Murdo Downie when he received command of *HMS Champion* on the Leith station in 1783. As he found 'no chart published of the east coast of Scotland that could in any degree be relied on' he sought and received Admiralty approval to embark on his own survey. This work was eventually published in 1792 as *The New Pilot for the East Coast of Scotland* and was apparently very well received by the Master of Trinity House of Leith.

The chart in Downie's pilotage was the last significant advance in coastal cartography until 1825 when the Admiralty commenced a complete re-charting of Scottish waters starting with the Western Isles.<sup>10</sup> This review included the Shetlands Isles which had previously been ignored by eighteenth century British naval strategists and cartographers.

### **Privately funded maps and charts**

Government schemes to promote seaborne trade and the fisheries were aided by the increase in the number and quality of local maps privately commissioned during the eighteenth century. Inshore tidal races, shelving and obstructions are evident in such early examples as those of Bruce's *Loch Sunart* (1730) and Jaffray's *Peterhead* (1739).

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<sup>8</sup> Act of Parliament, 15 Geo. III c.42.

<sup>9</sup> Eventually published as *Coasting Pilot for Great Britain and Ireland* (1804).

<sup>10</sup> Robinson, 'Charting', pp. 122-4.



The main anchorages of the upper Firth of Clyde were plotted to an indifferent standard by John Watt Senior around the same time (1734).<sup>11</sup> Dumfries Town Council were more careful in their recruitment of the estate surveyor of Monymusk, Thomas Winter, who used 'a machine' [probably a quadrant] for his survey (1742) of the great sand banks in the middle stretch of the Solway Firth.<sup>12</sup> Murdoch McKenzie the Elder privately surveyed Orkney (1746 or 1747) producing an eight map collection entitled *Orcades, or a Geographic and Hydrographic Survey of the Orkney and Lewis Islands* (1750). This set a new standard as the true location and outline of the latter isles were finally fixed to within working tolerances. Indeed, his work was still held in high regard by Orcadians fifty years later; 'it may be presumed ... that his map is as near the truth... as any idea we can form'.<sup>13</sup>

After 1760 details of the shoreline were regularly included in the new generation of county maps funded by private subscribers (mostly landed gentry anxious to develop seaborne access to their mineral and agricultural investments). The accuracy of maps, such as Ainslie's map of *Fife, Kinross and the Firths of Forth and Tay* and the Armstrongs's map of the *County of Ayrshire* (both published in 1775), owed much to Murdoch McKenzie's earlier advances in field surveying.

## Lighthouses

Documentary evidence points to the existence from medieval times of a light at Aberdeen and tradition has it that there were ecclesiastically maintained lights (peat fires) at Portpatrick and possibly on Fair Isle, north of Orkney.<sup>14</sup> By 1707 however

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<sup>11</sup> John Watt was a mathematician and uncle to the more famous James. Prints of his survey do not appear to have been generally available until 1759.

<sup>12</sup> J.N. Moore, 'Thomas Winter's Chart of the Solway Firth', *Transactions of the Dumfries and Galloway Natural History and Antiquarian Society* (1984), LIX, pp.57-63.

<sup>13</sup> *OSA*, Parish of Sandwick and Stromness, XVI, p. 412. He is also mentioned in four other Orcadian parish returns.

<sup>14</sup> D.B. Hague and R. Christie, *Lighthouses: their architecture, history and archaeology* (Llandysul, 1975), pp. 15-19.



there was only one permanent illumination in the waters of North Britain; that of the privately-owned fire tower on the Isle of May situated at the cross-roads of the eastern seaboard coastal traffic and the entrance to the Firth of Forth. Built in 1636, it was frequently obscured by low cloud and was more detectable by its smoke than by its glow. In stormy conditions its chauffer [firebox] could consume four tons of Fife coal a day, the cost of which was more than recovered through the light duty levied on passing vessels (£1 for a typical 160 ton British trader - double for a foreign vessel).<sup>15</sup>

By the 1780s the poor quality and high cost of this privately-owned light was the subject of public debate. In 1786 a series of wrecks incurring loss of life in the Forth prompted the Master of Trinity House of Leith to recommend that the Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce should pay to have the 'grossly neglected' coal brazier replaced by a 'moving oil light of reflective glass'.<sup>16</sup> They also suggested that the tower be raised to a height of sixty feet. These proposals were rejected as they did not address the basic locational flaw of the light in bad weather. The newly created Commissioners for the Northern Lights did however provide a horse-powered hoist to speed up the delivery of coal to the chauffer which was then three square feet, twice that of any other in Britain.

It was not until 1810 and the loss of *HMS Nymphen* and *Pallas* off Dundee with their entire crews (600 men), that the government intervened with a compulsory purchase order.<sup>17</sup> The light was then placed under the control of Trinity House of Leith

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<sup>15</sup> Collection of the May light money was farmed out. The principal tacksman was at Leith after 1707 who commissioned others at the headports around Britain. Some of whom were, apparently, reluctant to pass on their collection, e.g.; HCAS AC 8/83 Allan -v- Gardner. By 1799 annual duties amounted to £1,600 £60,000 was paid in compensation to its owner, the Duke of Portland when purchased.

<sup>16</sup> The Fraternity of Leith - the Incorporation of the Master and Assistants of Trinity House of Leith - had grown from its medieval role as a group dedicated to the welfare of local seamen and their families to a highly influential organisation that oversaw the examination and appointment of pilots and advised on all matters of maritime safety on the east coast after 1650.

<sup>17</sup> The tragedy occurred when their pilots mistook the glow from a open door of a lime kiln on the Haddingtonshire shore for the feeble illumination of the May Light; PRO ADM 1/ 5121, Miscellanea, 'Correspondence with the Commissioners for the Northern Lights and others about fires inshore being mistaken for the May Light' (1811).



which despatched Robert Stevenson to raise a new light at a lower elevation on the Isle (lit 1816).<sup>18</sup>

The Clyde masters sought similar aids to finding the channels on either side of the Little Cumbrae island that gave access to the upper firth ports and the prime foul weather anchorage of Fairlie Roads. Their initial petition of 1743 eventually secured, in April 1756, an *Act for erecting, maintaining and supporting a lighthouse* on the island.<sup>19</sup> Its chauffer was mounted on a round tower and burned Saltcoats coal when first lit in December 1757.<sup>20</sup> The trustees appointed to operate the light were required by the Act to use all surplus 'Light Money' paid to fund the removal of the shoals and mud-flats in the upper reaches of the Firth of Clyde. The original levy was one penny per ton burthen for British hulls, double for foreign vessels, and half for coasters over thirty tons.<sup>21</sup>

The Cumbrae light (standing at 122 metres above sea level) suffered from the same locational defect as that on the Isle of May and was frequently obscured by low clouds.<sup>22</sup> In 1785 it was proposed that the coal fire should be replaced by candle power but this was rejected for the same reasons as those proposed for the May Light. Eventually the fire tower was abandoned and a new light (mounting thirty-two oil lamps and silvered glass reflectors) was built in 1793 on the western end of the island at a much lower height of 35 metres.<sup>23</sup>

In 1786 the government established the Commission of Northern Lights at Edinburgh to undertake the awesome task of illuminating the Scottish coastline beyond the Forth. They, in turn, appointed an English-trained lamp-maker of renown, Thomas

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18 The old tower was reduced to half its original height in the process so as not to obscure the new illumination; Hague, *Lighthouses*, p.40.

19 A beacon fire had been lit from the height since 1750; J. Lamb, *Annals of an Ayrshire Parish: West Kilbride* (Glasgow, 1896), p. 128.

20 Graham, *Saltcoats*, p.17.

21 Act of Parliament, 29 Geo. II, c.20

22 Hague, *Lighthouse*, p.40.

23 Lamb, *Ayrshire Parish*, p.130 The wider management role of the Trustees is discussed in G. Blake, *Clyde Lighthouses*(Glasgow, 1950).



Smith, to raise four new lights.<sup>24</sup> The first was at Kinnaird Head, north of Aberdeen, which he illuminated with twenty oil lights raised on top of an existing four storey castle.<sup>25</sup> The other three lights were on the Mull of Kintyre (lit 1788), Eilean Glas on the southern tip of Lewis (lit 1789) and on the Pentland Skerries (lit 1794).

In making the case for the Kintyre light the Collector of Customs for Campbeltown stressed:

Unspeakable advantages would ensue from the light....for ships coming in from America and the West Indies come frequently between the coast of Ireland and the Island of Islay and the Mull of Islay (the Mull of Oa) is often mistaken for the Mull of Kintyre by which frequent shipwrecks happen.<sup>26</sup>

The position of this light proved however to be inadequate for vessels approaching from the south. The remedy to which was to build an additional light on the island of Pladda at the southern tip of Arran (lit 1790).<sup>27</sup> One contemporary commentator concluded that this new light, together with those already lit at Cumbrae, Portpatrick and Donaghadee, formed a chain of illuminations that was 'of singular use to the towns of Air, Irvine and Saltcoats, which carry on a considerable trade with Ireland and the towns of the west of England'.<sup>28</sup>

### **Light money and its impact on sailing patterns**

'Light money' was charged to all vessels with the exception of open boats, whalers and Archangel traders. It was calculated on the basis of the tonnage burthen of

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<sup>24</sup> Smith was trained by the King's Lynn by Ezekiel Walker at the expense of the Commissioner for the Northern Lights. It is highly probable that Smith left the design of the lighthouse structures to others in his tight-knit fraternity, namely, Robert Stevenson and Robert Kay. The latter, the architect of the South Bridge in Edinburgh, submitted plans for lighthouses to Smith during the years 1787-8.

<sup>25</sup> Lit in 1787, this lighthouse was found to be masked by Rattray Head to vessels approaching from the south; *OSA*, Parish of Fraserburgh, VI, p.13.

<sup>26</sup> Collector Campbeltown to the Board, CE 82 1/1, 8 March 1786.

<sup>27</sup> Act of Parliament, 26 Geo. III. c.52.

<sup>28</sup> *OSA*, Parish of Ballantrae, VI, p. 46.



the vessel and the number of lights passed (collected at the port of arrival). The variations in the cost of light money had a considerable effect on the route taken by masters and the attractiveness of some harbours as ports-of-call. This was particularly the case after 1788 when, to meet a shortfall in revenue, the duties on the new lights was raised to one and a half pence per ton for British vessels (three pence on foreign).

The east coast traders made the greatest saving on Light Money by going north-about when heading for Southern Europe or the Atlantic, rather than south-about through the English Channel.<sup>29</sup> So much so that by the early 1790s more than 2,000 vessels were passing through the Pentland Firth annually.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, west coast traders working the Atlantic or Southern Europe made savings on Light Money by using the North Channel rather than St. George's Channel.<sup>31</sup> Costs could be further reduced for those in transit by using the anchorages of the lower Firth of Clyde (Lamlash Bay, Campbeltown, Loch Ryan) and thereby avoid having to pay the Cumbrae light money.<sup>32</sup>

Coastal trading was encouraged between and within the Firths of Forth and Tay by the wavering of up to a fifth of light dues charged by the May Light and one quarter of the Tay light. The sea area as far as Red Head (south of Montrose) was also free from the 'British Duty' on the coastal movement of Fife coal in order to protect the home market from cheaper Tyneside imports.<sup>33</sup> No such dispensations were allowed elsewhere in Scotland, much to the indignation of local commentators. Indeed, after 1772, the Trustees of the Cumbrae Light imposed an additional three pence per ton levy on all passing vessels to pay for the dredging of the River Clyde. This, along with the imposition of the iniquitous 'British duty' on coal shipped along the Clyde coast, meant

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<sup>29</sup> A 160 ton vessel out from Leith would save round £10 by going north-about - the equivalent of three months wages for an able seaman; GUL MSS.GEN 1057. 3 March 1790, Custom House Report, Edinburgh.

<sup>30</sup> *OSA*, Parish of Canisbay, VIII, p. 167. While going north -about to Leith and the Baltic was commonplace for west coast vessels, they invariably went south -about if heading for London. This is evident in the reply given by the Collectors at the Clyde to the general enquiry made by the tacksman for the Spurn Head Light (Hull). His question was whether it would be appropriate or not to appoint agents at these ports. Their advice was that he would be wasting his time as few vessels took such a route.

<sup>31</sup> A 160 ton vessel clearing for the Atlantic from Port Glasgow via the North Channel saved the master £4 - 13/8d per passage; GUL MSS GEN 1057.

<sup>32</sup> The Cumbrae light money was by then 2d per ton plus 3d for improves to the River Clyde; *ibid*.

<sup>33</sup> This situation was highly detrimental to the growth of industry in the towns north of this headland.



that most coal extracted from the leading Ayrshire fields went to Ireland rather than to the Scottish lowland market.

### **Daymarks and harbour lights**

One of the most important effects of the mercantilist system on eighteenth century maritime activity was the rapid growth in the number of winter voyages undertaken by Scottish masters, particularly on the west coast. In the vanguard were the tobacco fleets which often returned in the depths of winter with the new crop from America.<sup>34</sup> Their numbers were swollen by an increasing number of coastal traders and herring busses lured on a winter voyage by the high prices fetched by coal in the expanding Irish markets or the prospect of the second bounty payment (after 1771). Consequently, the traditional lay-up period (end of December to early April) became increasingly less evident at the major ports as the century progresses.<sup>35</sup>

The cost of this change in seasonal activity was a sharp rise in the attrition rate which prompted the merchant community to raise daymarks and harbour lights at key ports or anchorages. In the lower Firth of Clyde the risk of embayment (being caught on the lee shore) was greatly increased by winter weather patterns. In a severe westerly gale the shoaled bays of the Ayrshire coast became traps for the average square-rigged brig of the period as they could not sail sufficiently to windward to tack round Portencross headland to gain the safety of Fairlie Roads. Vessels under 200 tons had the option of attempting to cross the sandbar at the entrance to the estuary ports on that coast (Ayr or Irvine). For this to be successful a high tide and a reasonable sea-state were essential. When wind and tide were against the embattled master the result was a wrecking. During the infamous winter of 1789 fourteen vessels were driven up on the

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<sup>34</sup> Entries of dockings in December and January are commonplace in the Port Books of Greenock and Port Glasgow (1742 onwards). The degree of attrition their hulls suffered is evident from the fact only a handful made more than ten trans-Atlantic crossings in their working lives.

<sup>35</sup> Graham, *Ayr*, p. 30.



rock-strewn shores of the Kyle and Carrick districts of South Ayrshire.<sup>36</sup> In one tempestuous night during that winter, twelve other vessels were stranded on the bar at Ayr, one of which broke up with great loss of life. As a result of this tragedy a subscription was raised to install a twin set of suspended coal-burning lights (later replaced by reflecting lights) which indicated the approach line to the channel and, by their vertical position, the depth over the harbour bar.<sup>37</sup>

In an effort to increase the survival rate of their investments in the lower Clyde, the Glasgow merchants raised two daymarks on the small flat Lady Isle, just off Troon point, to direct their embayed masters to the last possible deep-water off-shore anchorage. The Rev. Dr. McGill of Ayr considered their investment futile as 'nothing however but extreme necessity, can induce any ship to attempt anchoring there, be the [holding] ground ever so good, because there be no shelter above.'<sup>38</sup>

In south-westerlies this anchorage became untenable and the last hope was to run the vessel up on the sands behind Troon promontory. This desperate manoeuvre was successfully executed by a number of masters including Captain Denholm on the *Anne Galley* (200 tons) who, during the great storm of 19 January 1739, 'drove from Lamlash roads over to Troon where [he] ran her upon the same sands and was, with the whole crew, preserved'.<sup>39</sup>

The search for a suitable storm haven on the lower Clyde coast was a matter of much concern throughout the century. A consortium of Glasgow merchants tried, unsuccessfully, to acquire the Troon headland prior to their decision to build Port Glasgow.<sup>40</sup> Efforts were also made to dredge a channel across the sandbar at Ayr.<sup>41</sup> At

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<sup>36</sup> OSA, Parish of Stevenston, VI, p.681.

<sup>37</sup> OSA, Parish of Newton-on-Ayr, VI, p: 494.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, Parish of Ayr, VI, p. 36.

<sup>39</sup> CDC, Auchendarvie MSS [CA], box 22, bundle 3, hand written commentary. Other reports of this practice include that of Captain Andrew Troop, *Blandford* of Port Glasgow (110 tons), which was later salvaged from the sands along with its cargo of tobacco in 1774.

<sup>40</sup> OSA, Parish of Dundonald, VI, p. 179. Troon point came under the precinct of Irvine who sought to levy a charge for vessels using the anchorage as early as 1609.



Irvine it was proposed that a new channel should be cut across the last great meander of the River Irvine to increase its scouring force at the harbour mouth. Another scheme mooted was that a 'New Port Irvine' should be built in Millport Bay on the Great Cumbrae.<sup>42</sup> Robert Reid Cunninghame, owner of the coal port of Saltcoats widely circulated a pamphlet *To the Shipping Interest of the Clyde* prompted by 'the recent unfortunate stranding of the ships *Montezuma* and *Minerva* of Charleston, in the Bay of Ayr and Irvine'.<sup>43</sup> In it he extolled the virtues of his sandbar-free small harbour, built on a volcanic dyke (1700) that jutted out into the lower firth, as a storm haven. In order to fully exploit its locational advantage he proposed an ambitious plan to double its sheltered anchorage by enclosing the northern shore of Saltcoats bay (owned by the Earl of Eglinton) behind a new northern pier.<sup>44</sup> This scheme fell foul of the personal animosity between the two men and Reid Cunninghame's final contribution to maritime safety was a coal-burning fire brazier at the end of the pier extension built in 1797.<sup>45</sup>

The maritime development of the Solway Firth was greatly retarded by its notorious shifting sand banks, strong currents and a wide tidal range of twenty-five feet on a spring tide at Annan. In 1741 Dumfries Town Council embarked on major harbour improvements at Glencaple and Kingholm on the River Nith to secure their continued presence in the Atlantic and European trades. Part of this initiative involved anchoring buoys at the entrance to the river and in the main off-shore channel between the great Dumreef and Robin Rigg sand banks. The technology apparently did not exist in Scotland at this time as the three buoys deployed had to be purchased from

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<sup>41</sup> Ayr had expended the most effort tackling the depth over the bar. Crude dredging by dragging a sunken tree between two boats had been tried before channel fencing was introduced to increase the scurry of the river. This was involved setting up a string of triangle boxes filled with stones: *Ibid*, Parish of Ayr, VI, p. 34.

<sup>42</sup> McJannet, *Irvine*, p. 249. There are indications that the present day union of the rivers Garnock and Irvine at the harbour mouth is a fairly recent topographical event. Pont's survey (c.1608) would appear to represent the Garnock meeting the sea a few miles further north at the Stevenston side of the Ardeer sands. If this was so then the harbour at Irvine, without the additional force of the Garnock, would have been much shallower prior to 1600.

<sup>43</sup> CDC Auchendarvie MSS Box 22, bundle 3.

<sup>44</sup> *OSA*, Parish of Stevenston, VI, p.7.

<sup>45</sup> The iron fire cage suspended for a derrick at the pier end is evident in an drawing of the harbour (1818) now displayed in the North Ayrshire Museum, Saltcoats.



Rotterdam.<sup>46</sup> To compensate for the lack of notable landward features from which to identify the entrance to the Nith, a daymark tower was raised at Southernness (1749). Its height was subsequently increased by the widow of Richard Oswald sometime after 1784 as part of a plan to promote a coal exporting trade from the area. This structure was illuminated sometime in the late 1790s.<sup>47</sup>

West of the great sand-banks there was no natural storm haven on the Scottish side of the Solway. The Little Ross Isle in Kirkcudbright Bay was the only anchorage with good holding ground but offered limited shelter in the prevailing south-westerlies. It also served as 'the roads' for vessels waiting to negotiate the sand bar across the mouth of the River Dee which lay two miles across the bay. Such was the importance of this anchorage during the eighteenth century that the Rev. Robert Muter proposed that a lighthouse should be raised on the isle to guide ships in distress to the anchorage as 'many fatal accidents happen by ships missing the harbour, and being driven; either into Wigton Bay; or on to the banks of the Solway'.<sup>48</sup>

At Portpatrick a forty-six foot high harbour light with a reflecting lamp was raised at the pier end in 1779. This was to compensate for the lack of natural landmarks when attempting, in poor visibility, to locate the harbour entrance which was flanked by two submerged reefs.

On the east coast, Aberdeen was the only estuary port north of the Forth to undertake major works to improve its estuary channel prior to 1791. In 1770 Smeaton was retained by the town council to deflect the creep of sand along the coast and to funnel the force of the River Dee to scurry the bar. The outcome was the North Pier and a new 1,200 feet bulwark built on the south shore (1775-80). The scoured channel was marked by an unlit daymark until the 1790s when a signal tower was raised which

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<sup>46</sup> Moore, 'Thomas Winter's Chart', p. 58.

<sup>47</sup> G. Stell, 'Southernness Lighthouse', *Transactions of the Dumfries and Galloway Antiquities and Natural History Society*, LIX, p. 67.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, p. 13. A case in question was the loss of the *Neptune* of Dumfries, overset in Kirkcudbright Bay *en route* for Dieppe with tobacco from James Guthrie of Dumfries, in 1750; Act 24 Geo. II, c.35.



displayed a red flag during the day and a reflector light at night when there was nine feet or more depth of water over the bar.<sup>49</sup> The Montrose shippers floated equally ambitious schemes the only tangible result of which was a twenty-foot high beacon raised at the Scurdieness Bank in 1770.<sup>50</sup>

The earliest channel lights in Scotland were the two coal-fired beacons at Buddonness sand spit (1660) which, when aligned, set the course to clear the Cross Sand shoal and enter the Firth of Tay's narrow channel between the Averte and Goa sand banks.

In the Forth the highly influential Fraternity of Leith had daymarks raised on the islets of Inverkeith and Cramond, the tidal washed Black Rocks, and on a rocky patch at the extreme of the tidal bank off Leith. In 1709, at the behest of the Admiralty, they surveyed the tidal harbour that served the administrative capital of Scotland<sup>51</sup>. By then the old wind-mill at the landward end of the main pier had been converted into a signal tower which indicated the depth in the harbour and answered requests for pilots.<sup>52</sup> At the seaward end of the great wooden curved north pier, that flanked the tidal course of the Leith Waters, was a round house. This was later illuminated by a coal-fire basket in bad weather and was replaced (1789) by a more efficient reflecting oil lamp; 'its effect at sea is surprising, and the expense of maintaining it does not exceed that of the former one.'<sup>53</sup>

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49 The original Parliamentary Act (1773) permitted fixed moorings to be laid in the roadstead and to regularise the pilotage service; *OSA*, Parish of Aberdeen, XIX, pp. 153-5.

50 For fuller review of proposed harbour improvements is available in; D.G. Adams, 'The Harbour, its early history', *The Port of Montrose* (G. Jackson, and S.G.E. Lythe (ed.) Tayport 1993), pp. 27-41.

51 The mud in the main tidal basin was considered good for either 'flat or sharp' hulls; Mason, *Trinity*, p. 45.

52 A light was displayed as long as there was nine feet of water in the main basin.

53 Grant, *Edinburgh*, III, p. 273.



## Government intervention in port development

National security considerations were prime movers in the development of a number of Scottish ports. During Cromwell's subjugation of Scotland security imperatives dictated that most of the major investment at the ports of Leith, Ayr, Inverness and Lerwick was channelled into building giant star defensive citadels rather than in new quays or piers.<sup>54</sup> After the Fifteen Jacobite Rebellion however the inadequate quay at Inverness, the head port for northern mainland Scotland including the Isle of Skye, received the attention of government planners. The existing town quay on the southern bank of the River Ness (built 1675) was only capable of receiving vessels of c.80 tons and could not admit the average contracted vessel (c. 150 tons) when loaded with supplies and ordnance for the line of new forts along the Great Glen. As a consequence the new 'Citadel Harbour' was built (1725-32) further down-stream at a cost of £2,750.<sup>55</sup>

Portpatrick on the Mull of Galloway is the most outstanding example of later direct government intervention in Scottish port development. The administration's security-driven obsession with the shortest line of communication to Ireland dictated the choice of site for this strategic link.<sup>56</sup> This exposed anchorage had been used as a ferry point for the twenty-mile crossing since the Middle Ages but was still 'almost in a state of nature' when Smeaton surveyed the haven in 1768 at the behest of the Post Office General. The anchorage at that time was open to the full force of the Irish Sea and without a landing pier. The open-decked flat-bottomed wherries which acted as ferries normally resorted to a primitive 'over-the-side' mode of landing passengers and animals. In rough weather this could not be safely done and so an incoming wherry was met by

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<sup>54</sup> Cromwell had a small pier was built at Belhaven but this was abandoned by the time of the Restoration..

<sup>55</sup> 'The Harbour of Inverness' ,*The Inverness Courier*, 30 September 1910 and Pollitt, *Historic Inverness*, p. 113.

<sup>56</sup> In 1715 Adair had recommended the diminutive Port Logan. some ten miles south and marginally closer to Ireland was, as the site for the Irish packet service; I. Donnachie, *The Industrial Archaeology of Galloway* (Newton Abbot ,1971), p. 180.



'the whole inhabitants, men and women, [who] ran down, and by main force, dragged her up the beach, out of the reach of the waves, which would otherwise have dashed her to pieces'.<sup>57</sup>

The spur to the port's development was the completion of the military road from Carlisle to Portpatrick at the end of the Seven Years War (1764). By 1770 traffic had increased to such an extent that a dozen or so new dispatch boats (20-60 tons), hired on a first-come-first-served basis, were in operation.<sup>58</sup> In 1774 Smeaton was awarded the contract to build two piers to create a harbour protected from the fetch. It was a major project for the period and 'the finest quays in Britain' cost the government double the original estimate of £6,000 by the time they were completed in 1778. The following year the volume of the passenger trade leapt again when a post-coach service from Carlisle to Portpatrick via Dumfries was inaugurated.<sup>59</sup>

Maintaining Portpatrick harbour was a costly business as sections of the North Pier were regularly demolished by winter gales. By 1786 part of the pier was so undermined that a supporting bulwark had to be erected behind it at further cost of £1,200. This bulwark required rebuilding in 1792 and was completely demolished nine years later by a storm which threw its breastwork into the harbour mouth. After that disaster Telford surveyed the harbour and raised serious reservations as to the suitability of the site for its purpose.<sup>60</sup> Nevertheless, the administration (supported by Trinity House of Leith) came down in favour of maintaining the packet service at Portpatrick and supported Rennie's new scheme (begun in 1820) to re-build and expand the harbour.

A spin-off of this major development was the construction of a pier at Millport on the Great Cumbrae in the Firth of Clyde to facilitate the shipment of quarry stone to

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<sup>57</sup> OSA, Parish of Portpatrick, I, p. 39. Cattle boats, after the embargo on Irish livestock imports was lifted in the 1750s, ran mainly in the summer months.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, pp. 40-1.

<sup>59</sup> R.R. Cunninghame, *Portpatrick through the ages* (Stranraer, 1985), pp. 8-11.

<sup>60</sup> Donnachie, *Archaeology*, pp. 181-2



Portpatrick.<sup>61</sup> The remarkable Captain Crawford - commander of the *Cumbrae* customs wherry - secured the contract and had the quarry rubble dumped in the tidal way between the shoreline and the Craiglee islet to create 'a good working free stone quay' by 1772.

This pier guaranteed the use of Millport as the home station for the principal customs cruiser of the Firth of Clyde, which by 1790 was a very large cutter - *Royal George* (200 tons) - crewed by sixty local men.<sup>62</sup>

To be overlooked by government agencies was often the death knell for older ports, such as Burntisland in the Forth. Its promoters sought to regain its former prosperity by advocating its suitability as the watering and naval station of the Forth; 'in the opinion of professional men, docks ought to be established here, capable of receiving the largest ships of war. This is surely an object, well deserving the attention of government'.<sup>63</sup> As with Alloa, such proposals came to nought as the Admiralty continued to use Leith, despite its shortcomings, as its principal base in the Forth.

### **The development of deep-water ports on the upper Clyde**

Whilst Scotland was geographically well placed to benefit from both the general expansion in European trade and the rise of the Atlantic economy, the retarded state of her estuary harbours imposed severe constraints on the pace of her maritime development. For example, vessels waiting a high tide to cross the harbour bar at Ayr or Irvine had to anchor in Lamlash Bay (Arran) some eighteen miles across the firth. Laden Virginiamen returning to Ayr could only enter once they had been lightened - a highly-exposed operation as the vessel had to ride to anchor in Ayr Bay whilst lighters

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<sup>61</sup> Stone shipped from Dumbarton was also used.

<sup>62</sup> The total local population then numbered 509. Crawford also managed to lease his privately owned vessel - *Mary* - to the customs service as an additional cruiser out of Stranraer.

<sup>63</sup> The recent careening of the frigate *HMS Champion* was quoted as proof of its suitability; *OSA*, Parish of Burntisland, X, p. 93.



took off part of the cargo.<sup>64</sup> In the Forth, Inverkeithing Bay, eight miles from Leith, served as the off-shore anchorage for vessels waiting the tide.<sup>65</sup> In the Tay estuary larger vessels had to be loaded in mid-channel as there was insufficient depth, even with a full tide, at Dundee's town quay.<sup>66</sup>

What was required by the larger traders and whalers were accessible deep-water harbours, preferably with dry dock facilities for maintenance and repair of their hulls. The government's promotion of commercial docks was however restricted to the passing of Acts permitting an appropriate body to raise a local tax, invariably on malt or the sale of ales, to refund the initial outlay.<sup>67</sup>

The first deep-water harbour built to give quay-side access in all tides in Scotland was 'New Port Glasgow'.<sup>68</sup> It was built on a virgin sight in Newark Bay acquired by the magistrates and Council of Glasgow as an alternative to developing Irvine or Dumbarton. Construction of the West Quay was commenced in the late 1660's when the windfalls of the Dutch Wars and Charles's policy of neutrality led to a general recovery in west coast foreign-going trade. It was however a staged development as the breastwork of the inner harbour was only finally completed in 1675; the east quay some fifty years later (1732); and the mid-quay added in 1773.<sup>69</sup>

The catalyst for the development of a rival deep-water port of Greenock in the neighbouring Crawfordsdyke anchorage was the schism between the shippers of unfree Greenock and those of the free Newport Glasgow over harbour dues and warehousing in

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<sup>64</sup> The owners of the *Hope* of Ayr (140 tons) - anchored 'a good distance' out in Ayr Bay - appealed unsuccessfully to the Collector to have her unstamped documentation accepted so that the transshipment of her cargo of 235 hogsheads of tobacco to lighters could commence; GCA CE 76 1/4 Collector of Ayr to Edinburgh 26 February 1766.

<sup>65</sup> An old Dutch hulk was moored there as a 'lazaretto' (quarantine station); *OSA*, Parish of Inverkeithing, X, pp. 806-6.

<sup>66</sup> An example was the mid-channel loading of the *Amelia* of Perth (150 tons) with corn for Leghorn which the Collector allowed as 'the harbour cannot afford water [at high tide] to a ship of that burden laden... to go aboard in lighters without it were shipt at the Key'; Archive and Records Centre, Dundee, CE 70 1/1 Collector of Dundee to Edinburgh, 6 March 1735.

<sup>67</sup> The cost of the Citadel Quay at Inverness was recouped by this method.

<sup>68</sup> The 'New' prefix was retained until 1774.

<sup>69</sup> Marwick, *River Clyde*, p. 178.



the early 1690's when the Atlantic trade, albeit illegal, was taking-off. The site of Greenock had the distinct advantage of immediate access to open deep water and a substantial holding-ground off Kempock Point, the 'tail o' the bank', where large numbers of ocean-going vessels rode to their anchors in moderate weather awaiting a berth or change in the wind direction. Port Glasgow, by contrast, required a pilot to negotiate the estuary channel. This operational disadvantage, in both time and cost made a significant contribution to the diverging growth rates of the two ports during the century.<sup>70</sup>

The development of the port of Greenock can be attributed to one man - Sir John Shaw - whose determination and fore-sight cannot be over-estimated. He was spurred into independent action by the opportunities created by the Act of Union; having previously failed to secure a grant for his 'unfree' port from the Scottish Parliament in 1696 and 1700. His new harbour was the greatest capital project of its day in Scotland costing £5,555 11/1d recoverable over thirty years by a local tax on malt.<sup>71</sup> The harbour covered eight acres when completed in 1710 with eighteen feet of water at springs and eight feet at low tide and provided the model for the final layout of Newport Glasgow. The upper Clyde ports, when completed, were the only harbours north of Liverpool capable of receiving a fully-loaded vessel of 250 tons burthen at the quay side in all tides.

### **Quayside operations at the upper Clyde ports**

The high levels of shipping activity at these ports placed an intolerable workload on the officers charged with enforcing the government's 'prohibitions, restrictions and regulations of trade' at the quayside. The lengthy and elaborate procedures prescribed

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<sup>70</sup> The tonnage owned by Greenock first exceed that of Port Glasgow in 1767.

<sup>71</sup> A. Brown, *History of Glasgow*, III, p.377 as quoted by McArthur, *Port Glasgow*, p.72. The *Manie* (500 tons) built at Archangel for the East Indies trade, was advertised for sale by the local shipbuilders Scott and Frazer whilst in the dry dock; *Glasgow Mercury*, 19 September 1782.



by the Acts for the loading and unloading of 'customable' commodities greatly inhibited the turn-round time of vessels. Port Glasgow and Greenock was a unified customs precinct which, until 1763, covered the entire upper Firth of Clyde hence the the provision of technical support was co-ordinated.

The Collector of the upper Clyde ports therefore rigidly imposed a queuing order for the unloading berth at the legal quays as it was 'not the custom to unload two ships at one port at the same time'.<sup>72</sup> The rate of unloading of tobacco was largely determined by access to the appropriate weighing beam and the availability of landwaiters. By the mid-century Port Glasgow, as the main entrepôt for American tobacco, had two triangles, each supported two weighing beams, erected on the breastwork of her 'legal' quays. The weighing beams on the heavier triangle were dedicated to incoming cargoes while those on the lighter triangle were for out-going consignments of tobacco.<sup>73</sup> Greenock, being more diverse in its trading interest, had a greater range of weighing beams. The one beam on the East Quay was dedicated to weighing tobacco while the two affixed to a great triangle on the Mid Quay were general purpose. A fourth smaller beam was situated in the warehouse for weighing salt used in the fisheries.

The opening of the Broomielaw 'legal' quay by the Corporation of Glasgow in 1755 placed an additional burden on the Port Glasgow customs officers.<sup>74</sup> They acquired the additional duty of overseeing the transshipment of cargoes out of sea-going vessels anchored off Port Glasgow and into gabbarts (sailing lighters) for the up-river journey.<sup>75</sup> The 'want of cellar room' at the seaports had promoted this scheme to allow commodities to arrive at the city without the cargo first being landed on the quays of the upper Clyde seaports. Thereafter it was permissible for tobacco destined for domestic

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<sup>72</sup> The only exception to come to hand was the early admittance of the embargo breaking *Cochrane* of Port Glasgow (240 tons) as she was 'in great danger of sinking and with much difficulty her pumps keeps her above water' after an arduous Atlantic crossing; *ibid*, 24 December 1757.

<sup>73</sup> GCA CE 60 1/1 Collector of Port Glasgow and Greenock to the Board, 28 September 1756.

<sup>74</sup> The original quay was built in 1724 at a cost of £1833 sterling.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid*, 27 March 1758.



distribution or re-export (via land carriage to Bo'ness or Alloa) to be delivered directly from America to its owners in Glasgow.

Early in 1756 a weighing triangle and two beams were acquired from Edinburgh for the Broomielaw quay.<sup>76</sup> The first cargo processed being 394 hogsheads of Maryland tobacco transhipped from the hold of the *Scott* (130 tons) in March of that year.<sup>77</sup> By November 1757, the river-borne traffic was such that the Collector of Port Glasgow, under whose jurisdiction the Broomielaw then fell, petitioned Edinburgh to have the City's existing customhouse and warehouse re-located to the 'end of the Bridge, next to the Broomielaw'.<sup>78</sup>

### **Extending access and harbour facilities at the upper Clyde ports**

The great enterprise of deepening the River Clyde to receive sea-going vessels by the removal of twelve tidal washed shoals has been told by many historians.<sup>79</sup> Smeaton proposed to canalise the river along the twelve mile stretch from Glasgow to Dumbuck Ford by erecting a series of locks. Fortunately for the future Clydeside shipbuilding industry, this scheme was dropped in favour of the creation of an unrestricted narrow channel by a series of 'Jettees, Banks, Walls, Works and Fences' and selective dredging (started in 1773).<sup>80</sup> The cost was to be borne by the users of the river who were, in turn, guaranteed a minimum of seven feet in the channel at neaps or the remission of duty.

This scheme was prompted by the mounting pressure for the available berths at Greenock and Port Glasgow. At the latter, serious silting problems threatened its status as Glasgow's deep water port and a series of Acts (up to 1772) imposed heavier berthing

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid, 24 March 1757.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, 16 march 1756 (arrived in November 1755).

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, 17 November 1757.

<sup>79</sup> A technical account is available in; J.F. Riddell, *Clyde Navigation* (Edinburgh, 1979), pp. 11-33.

<sup>80</sup> Act of Parliament, 10 Geo. III, c.104.



charges to finance improvements. Greenock, as a self-governing Town Council after 1751, had regularly voted to use its harbour dues for small improvements but in 1773 responded to Port Glasgow's lead and petitioned Parliament to match its neighbour's harbour duties in order to bring fresh water to the town and erect new quays. In 1789 an Act of Improvement authorised the deepening and cleaning of the harbour floor as well as permitting Scott the shipbuilder to build a new 'Customhouse pier' to the east of the original harbour (completed 1791).<sup>81</sup> In 1801, as plans to build rival wet-docks were being made further down the Clyde coast, this piecemeal development of Greenock came to an end with the formation of a harbour trust to oversee the running of the port.

### **The development of Peterhead**

On the north-east coast the only large scale new port built during the eighteenth century was at the southern anchorage of Peterhead Bay. The opportunity to develop this site was yet another spin-off from war. The strategic importance of Peterhead in wartime was emphasised by the Rev. Dr. Moir; 'that in time of war, this being a head-land, is the place where privateers most frequently keep their station, and pick up ships which might find shelter here, but for want of access to a harbour, are obliged to beat against the wind for several days.'<sup>82</sup> After the failure of the Fifteen Rebellion, the Earl Marischal's town and lands of Peterhead were forfeited and sold to an English fishing company - in all probability the 'Orkney and Shetland Fishing Company'. When this company went bankrupt in 1726, the town was acquired by the Merchant Maiden Hospital of Edinburgh. This organisation, with the aid of funds from the Fraternity of Leith and the Convention of Royal Burghs, developed the southern harbour from 1737 onwards as a haven.<sup>83</sup> Smeaton surveyed the port in 1772 and found that 'the present

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<sup>81</sup> OSA, Parish of New Greenock, V, p. 577 and Dow, *Greenock*, p. 33.

<sup>82</sup> OSA, Parish of Peterhead, XVI, p. 600.

<sup>83</sup> The Fraternity of Leith granted 25 guineas towards improvements; J. Mason, *The History of Trinity House Leith* (Glasgow, undated), pp. 44-5.



pier being greatly decayed and shaken so that it will take two or three thousand pounds to put the harbour in good condition'.<sup>84</sup> Such was the importance of the anchorage that this large amount of capital was forthcoming and a new granite-clad pier capable of withstanding the force of heavy seas, along with a new enclosing bulwark from the western shore, were completed by 1777.

### **Port development in the Forth**

Bo'ness and Alloa were the only tidal anchorages in the Forth to deepen their harbours which largely accounts for their high rank by shipping activity in eighteenth century customs accounts. Bo'ness had developed rapidly as a port after received the status of head port in 1710. Sometime shortly afterwards the long West Pier with an inner quayside was built out into the firth. The East Pier was probably added sometime after 1744 when parliamentary permission was given to raise local taxation by the now usual mixture of higher docking dues and a levy on the local consumption of beer. The result was an enclosed two-acre harbour which was deepened in 1762 by an novel but effective scouring method developed by the local engineer Robert McKell. His system consisted of a moveable double-walled barrier which could be closed between the two existing piers to dam back the water in the inner quarter of the harbour:

During Spring tides, these sluices are regularly opened, and shut at full sea, when a great body of water is retained. At low water, the sluices are opened; emptying [into] the bason with so rapid a current, that in the course of a few years from the erection, a great increase to the depth of water in the harbour, was made, and continues to be maintained at a very small expense.<sup>85</sup>

The result was deep and safe berthing which attracted whalers and the larger traders which served the recently opened Carron Ironworks. The increase in activity was such

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<sup>84</sup> Buchan, *Peterhead*, p. 31.

<sup>85</sup> *OSA*, Parish of Borrowstoneness, II, p. 705.



that congestion at the quays became a major problem by the winter of 1763 when the harbour master ordered the laid-up whalers of Charles Addison & Co., to move to the middle of the harbour.<sup>86</sup> In June 1772 the Carron Company opened a waggonway from the ironworks to the west pier of the harbour which became the main loading quay for the company fleet and delivery of ironstone from Dysart. This remained the situation until Grangemouth was developed twenty years later which incurred the rapid decline of Bo'ness.<sup>87</sup>

Alloa, the head port for the tidal stretch of the River Forth, mimicked the Bo'ness system, though on a much reduced scale, by utilising the retained head of water behind the local mill dams to occasionally scour the harbour basin. This combined with her greater tidal range allowed entrance to vessels with a draft which would have had difficulty clearing the bar at Leith to reach Alloa on a flood allowing the port to conduct a steady trade to the Continent.<sup>88</sup>

The Waters of the Leith did not have the force to scour the whole harbour floor and only deepened the basin along its immediate low-tide course by two feet. This narrow channel however allowed the deeper draft hulls to moor upstream and helped to ease the chronic congestion along the piers. A traveller's report of 1779 described Leith as 'a very poor place ...the harbour is generally crowded with vessels from any parts and from here to Kinghorn, in Fifeshire, the passage boat passes every tide, except on Sundays.'<sup>89</sup> Clearance of the harbour bar required a full tide for most vessels of burthen. Access rapidly deteriorated during north-easterly gales which threw up the bar to a level which made running aground a common occurrence. Indeed, many London-bound

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<sup>86</sup> T.J. Salomon, *Borrowstoneness and District* (Edinburgh, 1913), p. 239.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 238-259.

<sup>88</sup> The Alloa customs records for the period 1742-1786 have been the subject of a local history group research project the finds of which were published in 1978 by M. Haynes, 'Alloa Port, Customs and Excise Accounts' *Forth Naturalist and Historian*, III, pp. 113-127.

<sup>89</sup> 'A modern Universal Traveller' published 1779 as quoted by J. Campbell, *Leith and its Antiquities* (Edinburgh, undated), p. 177.



passengers frequently travelled by road to Berwick-on-Tweed to board the fast cutters that sailed for London with salmon.<sup>90</sup>

The dire financial difficulties of Edinburgh Corporation during the eighteenth century effectively checked a 'Bo'ness solution' for the port of Leith. In 1753 an Act had been passed to extensively develop the port but, without the powers to fund the project, it was never implemented. In 1771 the entrepreneur and privateering promoter, Thomas Catanach, returned from Holland with a working model of his plans for improving the harbour by a system of tidal lock gates and a canal link to a small basin in the centre of Edinburgh.<sup>91</sup> The city magistrates apparently dismissed his plans out of hand and were content with a small scale programme of widening and deepening the existing basin which included building a new 'Customs House' quay (1777). In 1786 however Whitworth was engaged to survey the north shore and harbour with the view of excavating a twenty acre wet-dock area and the following year another Act of Parliament empowered the magistrates and councillors of Edinburgh to act on his proposals.<sup>92</sup> The outcome however was little more than some repairs to the existing quay and a drawbridge, similar to Catanach's model, over the river mouth.

Government intervention was required to solve Leith's chronic congestion and limited access. In 1800 the Court of Exchequer of Scotland authorised the diversion of £25,000 from repayments of government loans made by the Forth Clyde Canal consortium to finance Rennie's plan (first submitted in 1779) for a wet-dock complex.<sup>93</sup> This sum eventually reached £160,000 by the time the foundation stone for the new Queen's wet dock was laid in 1801.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid, p. 273.

<sup>91</sup> Macpherson, *Commerce*, IV, p.175.

<sup>92</sup> Act of Parliament 25 Geo. III. c.58.

<sup>93</sup> Act of Parliament 39 Geo. III. c.76.

<sup>94</sup> Work was not started however until 1810 and only completed in 1817; Grant, *Edinburgh*, III, chapter xxxiii.



The wet-dock solution was also embraced on the west coast at this time as the Dukes of Portland and Eglinton sunk their personal fortunes on similar grand schemes at the virgin sites of Troon and Ardrossan respectively.

### **Dry docks**

Prior to 1707 there were no dry-docks (graving docks) in Scotland. Instead a 'hard standing' - a sloping mud shelf usually bolstered by bundles of bound heather - was usually set aside at the major ports to clean and repair hulls at low tide.<sup>95</sup> The first dry-docks were built to serve the navy in the Forth. After much wrangling and competition the Leith dry-dock was commissioned by the Admiralty shortly after 1710 but was badly built and only capable of admitting ships of 150 tons, too small to serve its intended purpose. The privately-dug dry-dock at Alloa, reputedly capable of receiving 'a forty-gun warship', does not appear to have been patronised by the navy and was probably only used by local masters.<sup>96</sup> Indeed, during the eighteenth century naval and customs commanders in Scottish waters often chose to careen their vessels on local beaches - a dangerous and time consuming operation.<sup>97</sup>

Such a situation was wholly inadequate in wartime or for an expanding Atlantic fleet. In 1762 the excavation of a major dry-dock was started at Port Glasgow and took three years to complete owing to the wartime shortage of oak beams. When completed it was drained by a horse-driven pump, designed by James Watt who later improved the dock (1772) so as to accommodate two vessels of 500 tons at one time.<sup>98</sup> The lack of a dry-dock at Greenock was not addressed until the last year of the American War when a subscription was raised amongst the local shippers and merchants. The dock was

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95 Re-tarring the bottoms of smaller vessels required their careened hull to be clean by burning whin-bush. The beach set aside for this essential operation was locally known as the 'tar-pot'.

96 *OSA*, Parish of Alloa, IX, p. 660.

97 The naval vessels in the Forth often used the shore at Burntisland while the excise brigs used Elie.

98 GCA CE 60 1/1 Collector of Port Glasgow and Greenock to the Board, 28 October 1756.



completed sometime before 1789 at a cost of £4,000. These docks were central to the subsequent rapid expansion of shipbuilding and repair at these ports.

### **The impact of the Forth-Clyde canal on north-about passages**

The hazards inherent in a circumnavigation of Scotland were a major consideration, along with national security, in the promotion of ship canals during the eighteenth century. Only the Forth-Clyde Canal however was completed prior to 1791.

This thirty-five mile canal was opened in sections and so had a significant impact on shipping activity even before the final section to Bowling (completing the sea to sea route) was formally opened in 28 July 1790. In the increasingly unified grain market the opening of the canal branch to Glasgow (1777) effectively ended the north-about seaborne convenience of grain from the east coast. In other bulk trades, for example in Baltic timber, the raising of the height of the canal banks in 1787 (which deepened the canal by a foot) allowed larger barges of (c.108 tons registered) to pass its length at a charge rate of two pence per ton per mile. With the opening of the final Bowling section the total cost was 5/10d per ton from coast to coast. Henceforth much of the coastal bulk trade, such as West Highland slate which had been previously carried north-about to Edinburgh, crossed the waist of lowland Scotland in the safety of a canal barge.<sup>99</sup>

The principal loser to these transport developments was the port of Bo'ness which was eclipsed by Grangemouth, the eastern saltwater terminal of the canal network. Port development at Grangemouth had commenced in 1777, the year of the opening of the canal cutting to Glasgow, but had little impact on shipping patterns of the area until 1783 when, for the convenience of the Carron Company, a cut was made across the bends in the River Carron which greatly facilitated direct access to the Forth.

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<sup>99</sup> OSA, Forth and Clyde Navigation, V, p. 591. On the north-about Forth-Clyde sea route light duties alone would account for one-fifth of the transportation cost by canal.



After the Forth-Clyde Canal was fully opened (1791) Grangemouth hegemony of the trans-lowland water-borne trade was complete.<sup>100</sup>

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100 I. Bowman, 'The Grangemouth Dockyard Company', *Scottish Industrial History* (1977), 1.2, XVIII, p. 4.



## CONCLUSION

This study has sought by blending naval and maritime histories at both national and regional levels to relate and analyse the impact of maritime affairs on the progress of the Scottish nation during the dynamic period of mercantilism. In doing so it provides insights into Scotland's relationship with England and the other maritime powers at critical stages; the strategic thinking behind the formation and working of the British mercantilist system.

Aggressively promoted and enforced exclusion of rivals in the nation's carrying trades and fisheries was the central tenet of the *clausum mare* school of political economy that dominated thinking in English government circles after 1650. This ideology permeated their dealings with Scotland over the next fifty turbulent years. During the imposition of the Cromwellian Commonwealth a number of the Scottish ports were wilfully ravaged and their foreign trade interrupted. After the Restoration the English protectionist lobby ensured that the Scottish marine was assigned alien status under the English Navigation Acts and so excluded from the English domestic and colonial carrying trades. The unintended beneficial effects for the Scots of this strained relationship were a share in the great windfall of prizes taken during the Second and Third Dutch wars and a flourishing illegal trade with the English plantations initially under the cover of transporting felons. These factors gave the first boosts to Scotland's diminutive and otherwise excluded shipping industry.

Scottish attempts to instigate their own variation of mercantilism floundered on a dire lack of indigenous skills and capital on one hand, and a series of internal upheavals and royal interference on the other. Although Scotland's chronic economic ailments remained unalleviated, the pre-Union period did however witness a convergence of Scottish maritime law with international practice and the move to end



the Royal Burghs' monopoly of foreign trade. Developments that laid the foundations for her future participation in the expanding European and Atlantic trades

A critical point was reached with the Glorious Revolution which ended the *ad hoc* gradual rehabilitation of the Scots into the English mercantilist system tolerated by the Stuarts. Thereafter the protectionist lobby exploited William's financial dependency on the English Parliament to close all remaining loopholes in the Navigation Acts. This completed the Scottish marine's isolation from any legitimate contact with English-controlled overseas markets. Under the additional strain of war the latent hostility between the Scottish and English marines was unleashed to the point where Scotland's newly re-asserted independent maritime sovereignty was directly challenged. The crown's response to the growing diplomatic schism was the creation of a Scots Navy as a means to curb the chain of 'tit-for-tat' outrages at sea and defuse the maritime sovereignty issue.

On the Scottish side the harsh lessons of the ill-fated Darien Scheme and the national backlash that resulted in the execution of Captain Green deeply influenced the position taken up the Commissioners summoned south to draft the Act of Union. Without a significant maritime 'force' at its disposal or England's 'goodwill', an independent Scotland could not hope to sustain a presence in a world increasingly dominated by the major maritime powers. On England's part, the possibility of an independent Scotland forming an alternative trading alliance with or seeking the naval protection from a rival European maritime power was unacceptable. The inescapable conclusion was that a full incorporating Union was the only viable option acceptable to the maritime interests on both sides.

The imposition of the English mercantilist system immediately following England's covert annexation of Scotland in 1707. The Scottish customs service was the only area of administration to experienced extensive reform as it was required to deal immediately with the elaborate high-tariff regime and the prohibitions, restrictions and



regulations to trade that constituted the new British mercantilist system. By all accounts this was a fraught business which incurred a series of unique reviews by the Customs Inspectorate from which it is evident that coastal traders had led the expansion of the Scottish marine in the years immediately following the Union (1707-12). The advent of regular 'triangular' and 'round-about' trading by Scottish vessels in European and American waters at this time allowed for a 'trading-up' of cargoes which largely compensated for the lack of an indigenous manufacturing base. The Clyde's Atlantic tobacco trade, then in its infancy, only involved a handful of Scottish-owned vessels at this time. By the mid 1730s however the upper Clyde ports had come of age in the Atlantic trades and acquired a fleet of ocean-going vessels thereby dispensing with chartered English hulls.

Thereafter the fortunes of the Scottish marine and its support industries were firmly tied to British political and foreign affairs. Warfare was endemic to the eighteenth century and played a significant role in accelerating the shift of Scotland's Atlantic trades to the Clyde as the east coast ports bore the brunt of enemy incursions into Scottish waters. Prior to 1750 however the recurring scourge of Jacobitism frustrated attempts to capitalise on the Clyde's wartime locational advantages over other major British ports. The removal of this threat after Culloden and the government's moves to pacify the Highlands heralded a more stable era during which the Scottish shipping industry finally reaped the benefit of its membership of the British mercantilist system. The Seven Years War was a 'good war' for most of Scottish west coast traders as the short-lived disruptions in home waters were more than compensated for by the new trading opportunities in Canada and the West Indies. So much so that, after the restoration of the security of the North Channel (1760) the Clyde's Atlantic fleet established itself as the principal carrier of American tobacco for the next fifteen years.

The disruption caused by American raiders and their allies in Scottish waters during the American War of Independence dislocated Scotland's established overseas



trading patterns. In the long term however the war stimulated the Scottish armaments and ship-building capacity, laying the foundations of new staple industries.

Throughout this study great emphasis has been placed on the diversity of the regional experience, particularly in wartime. In doing so it has sought to highlight the contribution made by the lesser ports to the growth of the Scottish economy, normally hidden within the returns of the head port. Likewise, the role of an assortment of smaller vessels and lesser captains and merchants to Scottish success in the European and Atlantic trades has also been re-appraised.

The government's attempts to remedy the lack of reliable pilotage charts and few navigational aids, together with the general under-development of the estuary ports have been identified as imposing limits on both the numbers and size of hulls frequenting the Scottish ports. Prior to 1791 only Port Glasgow and Greenock offered wet and dry docking to the larger ocean-going hulls, facilities which ensured their domination of the Atlantic trades in peace and war.

The promotion and management of the various bounty schemes in the fisheries serves to illustrate the contradictory forces inherent in the mercantilist system. The resort to tonnage bounties to nurture non-existent home industries may have laid the foundations but did little to promote an efficient and competitive industry at the time. As Adam Smith put it 'fishing for the bounty not the fish'. Likewise, the massive black economy in Scotland, created by the Navigation Acts and the high tariff regime, undermined the levels of revenue received from customs duties. This, in turn, led to irregular payments of the herring industry, with disastrous effects on the stability and growth of the fishing industry.

The wealth of records and statistics compiled on the performance of the Scottish shipping industries by a succession of government agencies and commentators offer a unique insight in practicalities of the mercantilism system at the quayside. Without a bonded warehouse system to regulate the transit of re-exports, inordinate amounts of



time and energy (and occasionally life) was expended by the customs service curtailing the sharp practice and smuggling that was ingrained in the local communities. Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* (1776) was but one denouncement of this elaborate, oftentimes unenforceable, web of duties and bounty payments that stifled free enterprise.

In its defence the protection afforded the Scottish marine by the British mercantilist system had the dynamic effect of nurturing virtually non-existent trades, skills and support industries. By 1791 Scotland had caught up with her European rivals in sea-going trading, the fisheries, ship-building and armaments. Such skills and experience were invaluable in securing the place of the Scots in the great expansion of the trade of the British Empire in the following century. Likewise the rise to pre-eminence of Scottish engineering with the new marine technologies was firmly based on the late eighteenth century legacy . A world-class industry that was based as much on the introduction of the composite hull and new sail plans, as the more acclaimed introduction of the iron hull and steam propulsion.



## APPENDIX A: TONNAGE MEASUREMENTS

Tonnage measurement was integral to the 'political arithmetick' of the mercantilist era. The co-existence of a number of differing tonnage measurements and descriptions however poses a fundamental dilemma for historical analysis.

The prime calculation was 'registered' tonnage - the official description of the vessel's internal carrying capacity - which was first imposed on English vessels trading to the plantations and colonies by an appendage to the 1694 Navigation Act. This requirement was extended to Scottish vessels after 1707. The 'formula of 1694', calculated the internal measurements of the hull by: 'the length of the keel within the board, by the midships beam from plank to plank, multiplied by the depth of the hold from the plank below the keelson to the under part of the upper deck plank, divided by ninety-four';

$$\frac{\text{length} \times \text{breadth} \times \text{depth}}{94}$$

94

By 1720 the impracticality of regularly attempting to internally measure the true depth of a loaded and floating hull was conceded and a further Act of Parliament (6 George.1) dispensed with this aspect. In its place was substituted an assumed depth derived by halving the breadth of the hull;

$$\frac{\text{length} \times \text{breadth} \times \frac{1}{2} \text{ breadth}}{94}$$

94

This formula was extended to all sea-going vessels in the ports of Great Britain by an Act 13 George III c.14 (1773) as, 'it is expedient that one certain Rule for this purpose should be settled and established in all cases'. Soon afterwards the formula was revised (Act, 13 George III c.74) to simplify measuring of hulls by allowing all measurements to be taken externally. Length was the 'between the perpendiculars'



dropped from the bow and the apex of the stern post with the deduction of 3/5th of the breadth to compensate for the rake of the hull. Breadth was measured at the extreme point of the hull on the outer side of the planking. The true depth of hold remained discarded from the calculation:

$$\frac{(\text{length} - 3/5\text{th breadth}) \times \text{breadth} \times (\text{breadth} / 2)}{2}$$

This formula has since become known as 'Builders' Old Measurement' (B.O.M.) or 'Old Law' measurement and was in force at the time of Act of Registry (1786) and retained, with an adjustment to the size of the denominator, for the next fifty years.

The other common format of measurement - tonnage 'burthen' - was used in business transactions throughout the period. The modern concept of 'light displacement' tonnage (the weight of the empty vessel) did not then exist nor, indeed, was it of interest to the owner or master during the mercantilist era. Their common concern was the carrying potential or 'burthen' of the vessel, a concept which has its closest equivalent in the modern 'net registered' tonnage (the income yielding enclosed space).

The Scottish mariner William Falconer in his *Universal Dictionary of the Marine* (1780) defined a vessel's burthen as 'the weight or measure of any species of merchandise that a ship will carry when fit for sea'. Such a flexible definition gave masters the scope to minimise their tonnage for duty purposes or maximise if claiming insurance or chartering to government agencies prior to 1786.

The relationship between the 'registered' and 'burthen' measurements changed with time and formulae. McCusker's research on tonnage measurements concluded that the pivotal point was the 1694 Navigation Act which presented the authorities with the opportunity to re-align (what was then over-estimating) 'registered' with



tonnage burthen.<sup>1</sup> After 1700 changes in hull design swung the drift between the two measurement the other way whereby 'registered' fell behind tonnage 'burthen'. This trend received a further boost with the '1720 formula' which dropped the true depth of hull element in the calculation. The database of Scottish vessels deployed in this study indicates that by the 1770s the ratio between 'registered' and 'burthen' measurements was in the region of 1:2 for the large bulk traders and 2:3 for the smaller 'sharp' hulls such as cutters.

This situation was acknowledged by the authorities of the time. The Navy Board measured all hulls chartered during the war years by the formula but paid 'ton and tonnage' (up to an additional one third over and above 'registered' tonnage) in acknowledgement of the vessels's true cargo-carrying potential.

The tonnage measurement(s) deployed in the main sources prior to 1786 are as follows:

**Registered tonnage** ('measured' or 'carpenter's')

Plantation Registers; Naval Officers' Accounts; bounty vouchers, government contractors.

**Tonnage burthen** ('captain's' or 'cargo')

*Low variation:* Port books; light duties; Greenwich Hospital (sailor's sixpence); Danish Tolls; letters of marque declarations; customs annual shipping returns.

*High variation:* Lloyd's Registers, newspaper advertisements for sale.

Within a particular source however inconsistencies in reporting can cause the tonnage for the same vessel to fluctuate as much as 20% between entries prior to 1786.

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<sup>1</sup> J.J. McCusker, 'The tonnage of ships engaged in British Colonial trade during the Eighteenth Century', *Research in Economic History*, VI, pp. 73-106.



## APPENDIX B: THE 1725 REVIEW AND THE REGISTRATION OF VESSELS PRIOR TO THE ACT OF REGISTRY (1786)

The credibility of the 1725 Review is called into question by the existence of a second and fundamentally incompatible customs review of Scottish shipping for the same period (1707-13). This second survey was ordered much later (1790) by the Committee of Trade. The anonymous Edinburgh Customs official charged with the task (almost certainly James Garrety) put forward 'after several attempts... a guess' that the Scottish ports in 1707 had supported an impressive fleet of 528 vessels. Over the next five years this tally rose by a modest net gain of sixty-nine hulls.<sup>1</sup> His post-script expressed his concern for the accuracy of his report:

It is observed that a very great proportion of the shipping belonging to Scotland both at the Union and in 1713 were not registered but owing to the want of materials it is hard to guess at this distance in time, what number of vessels and amount of tonnage and number of mariners might pertain to that part of the United Kingdom at either period.

By this admission it is plainly evident that he was unaware of the existence of the earlier 1725 Review nor had access to its original source - the 'generall register'.<sup>2</sup> It would also seem fairly certain from his comment that few, if any, of the early Scottish port books and registers held at Edinburgh had survived by the time of his enquiry. All things considered, this second survey can be discarded as largely guesswork.

Of more concern is his assertion that 'a very great proportion' of Scottish masters had not registered their vessels immediately after 1707 which, if transposed to the 1725 Review, would imply that it cannot be taken as representing the full extent

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<sup>1</sup> GUL, MSS Gen 1057. Taken at face value this second survey would imply that the Scottish fleet of 1707 had doubled in number since the Convention of Royal Burghs survey in 1692, - which would contradict established opinion that the dire condition of the Scottish marine was only alleviated after 1707.

<sup>2</sup> It was probably lost in the devastating fire that swept the London Customs House in 1742.



of the Scottish marine at that time. His view may well reflect the deeply entrenched and jaundiced assumption held by late eighteenth century officialdom, namely; that the earlier lawlessness and rife anti-establishment sentiment of the Scottish coastal communities engendered a wanton disregard for all statutory requirements - including the registration of foreign-going local vessels.

Logic, on the other hand, dictates that registration after December 1707 was one legal requirement that every Scottish trader and smuggler would adhere to as failure to produce the vessel's register on demand was grounds for arrest at sea or at a colonial port and, ultimately, the confiscation of the vessel and its cargo. On the other hand the reward for conformity was the freedom to carry British and European manufacture to the British Plantations and home market, including Ireland. There was, also, no significant financial incentive to avoid this requirement. Having paid the small registration fee there was no subsequent tax or duty levied, other than the unavoidable harbour, wharfage and lights dues, on the vessel itself.

The physical act of registration, prior to the more rigorous system imposed by the Act of Registry (1786), was a relatively simple matter. One or more of the owners attested before the Collector of Customs at the home port as to their vessel's 'British' origin or produced a condemnation from a British Court of Vice Admiralty if she was a foreign-built prize. Having done so all other essential documentation (Mediterranean passes and plantation certificates) were forthcoming via the local Collector.

It would therefore seem a more reasonable assumption that most Scottish traders intent on a foreign-going venture would have registered their vessel in the six months following the Union or thereafter. This view finds strong support from Rupert Davis, one time librarian to HM Customs and Excise and authority on eighteenth century British shipping registers, who concluded his review of the 1707-86 period with the remark that:



The Scots, perhaps out of naive Scottish pride, seem to have thought that the object of registry was to register as many vessels as possible to the Scottish ports... [when] the real object of registry was precisely to register only those vessels that qualified [to engage in colonial trade under the requirements of the Navigation Acts]... and hence to refuse to register those that did not.<sup>3</sup>

There are however two simpler explanations. Firstly, that Scottish owners and masters were more than canny, given their previous experiences, in protecting their new post-1707 legality when trading to the British colonies or the home market. Secondly, to differentiate themselves from Irish vessels which were then still excluded from full trading rights to mainland Britain and the plantations.

The conclusion is that the 1725 Review stands as one of the most comprehensive maritime surveys to have survived from the early mercantilist era.

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<sup>3</sup> R.C. Davis, 'Ship Registry 1707-1786' *Maritime History*(1972), 2.2 , p.154.



Appendix C. Table: 4.1 A comparison of the registered Scottish fleets 1707 and 1712

Port	1707			By 1712		
	Number	Tonnage	Rank by tons	Number	Tonnage	Rank by tons
1 Aberdeen	22	941	[7]	88	3408	[5]
2 Ayr	1	60		10	372	
3 Alloa	18	502	[10]	60	1976	
4 Anstruther	19	1192	[5]	58	2173	[9]
5 Bo'ness	26	2451	[2]	104	6913	[2]
6 Caithness/Thurso	0	0		10	298	
7 Campbeltown	0	0		30	395	
8 Dumfries	0	0		7	132	
9 Dunbar	1	30		23	640	
10 Dundee	25	1315	[4]	57	2922	[6]
11 Ft. Will	0	0		0	0	
12 Inverness	7	415		26	1136	
13 Isle Martin/Ullapool	0	0		0	0	
14 Irvine	1	20		90	2325	[8]
15 Kirkcaldy	18	1690	[3]	69	3867	[3]
16 Kirkcudbright	0	0		2	25	
17 Leith	39	3354	[1]	106	8202	[1]
18 Montrose	6	584	[9]	72	2669	[7]
19 Oban	0	0		1	10	
20 Kirkwall	0	0		13	265	
21 Perth	0	0		3	140	
22 Port Glasgow	15	959	[6]	73	3716	[4]
23 Glasgow	1	30		4	86	
24 Greenock	6	285		63	1582	
25 Prestonpans	6	725	[8]	26	2082	[10]
26 Rothesay	0	0		13	199	
27 Stornaway	0	0		0	0	
28 Stranraer	1	60		12	207	
29 Portpatrick	0	0		15	154	
30 Tobermory	0	0		0	0	
31 Wigton	0	0		3	104	
32 Zetland	0	0		3	118	
	212	14613		1041	46116	

Source: BL *Harlean* MSS 6269. Note: Not all vessels are included in this list as the compiler omitted to include the tonnage of five hulls. Likewise, a further sixty odd hulls have not been included as, while they were listed with their tonnage, there is no home port mentioned. This computes to a shortfall of c.7.5% between the total tonnage and that apportioned by precinct in the table.



Appendix C. Table:4.2 Distribution by vessels between head ports and creeks by  
1712

Precinct	Head port		Creeks		Precinct Total	
	Number	Tonnage	Number	Tonnage	Number	Tonnage
1 Aberdeen	39	2155	49	1253	88	3408
2 Ayr	10	372	1	6	11	378
3 Alloa	55	1846	5	130	60	1976
4 Anstruther	14	581	44	1592	58	2173
5 Bo'ness	37	3844	67	3069	104	6913
6 Caithness/Thurso	3	44	7	254	10	298
7 Campbeltown	19	238	11	157	30	395
8 Dumfries	6	124	1	8	7	132
9 Dunbar	19	515	4	125	23	640
10 Dundee	57	2922	0	0	57	2922
11 Ft.Will	0	0	0	0	0	0
12 Inverness	16	693	10	443	26	1136
13 Isle	0	0	0	0	0	0
Martin/Ullapool						
14 Irvine	42	1186	48	1136	90	2325
15 Kirkcaldy	31	2778	38	1089	69	3867
16 Kirkcudbright	2	25	0	0	2	25
17 Leith	103	7982	3	220	106	8202
18 Montrose	41	2040	31	629	72	2669
19 Oban	1	10	0	0	1	10
20 Kirkwall	8	160	5	105	13	265
21 Perth	2	100	1	40	3	140
22 Port Glasgow	60	3461	10	255	73	3716
23 Glasgow	4	86	0	0	4	86
24 Greenock	41	1334	22	248	63	1582
25 Prestonpans	20	1955	6	127	26	2082
26 Rothesay	2	20	11	179	13	199
27 Stornaway	0	0	0	0	0	0
28 Stranraer	10	171	1	30	11	201
29 Portpatrick	15	154	0	0	15	154
30 Tobermory	0	0	0	0	0	0
31 Wigton	3	104	0	0	3	104
32 Zetland	3	118	0	0	3	118
<b>Total</b>	<b>663</b>	<b>35018</b>	<b>378</b>	<b>11199</b>	<b>1041</b>	<b>46116</b>

Source: BL Harlean MSS 6269



## Appendix C

Table: 4.3 The average tonnage at each head port and their creeks 1712.

Precinct	Head port	Creeks	Precinct
	Average	Average	Average
1 Aberdeen	55	26	39
2 Ayr	37	6	34
3 Alloa	34	26	33
4 Anstruther	42	36	37
5 Bo'ness	104	46	66
6 Caithness/Thurso	15	36	30
7 Campbeltown	13	14	13
8 Dumfries	21	8	19
9 Dunbar	27	31	28
10 Dundee	51	0	51
11 Ft. Will	0	0	0
12 Inverness	43	44	44
13 Isle Martin/Ullapool	0	0	0
14 Irvine	28	24	26
15 Kirkcaldy	90	29	56
16 Kirkcudbright	13	0	13
17 Leith	77	73	77
18 Montrose	50	20	37
19 Oban	10	0	10
20 Kirkwall	20	21	20
21 Perth	50	40	47
22 Port Glasgow	58	26	51
23 Glasgow	22	0	22
24 Greenock	33	11	25
25 Prestonpans	98	21	80
26 Rothesay	10	16	15
27 Stornaway	0	0	0
28 Stranraer	17	30	18
29 Portpatrick	10	0	10
30 Tobermory	0	0	0
31 Wigton	35	35	35
32 Zetland	39	0	39
<b>Averages</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>44</b>

Source: BL Harlean MS 6269



## Appendix C

Table: 4.4 Extract of larger Scottish hulls 1707-12

Head port	Vessel	Tonnage	Average tonnage of precinct	
Aberdeen	<i>Johannah</i>	130	39	
	<i>Christain</i>	120		
	<i>Arthur</i>	120		
Alloa	<i>Robert</i>	300	33	
Anstruther (Elie)	<i>Mary</i>	200	37.5	
Bo'ness	<i>Christain</i>	300	66.5	
	<i>Isable</i>	280		
(Queensferry)	<i>James</i>	180		
(Burntisland)	<i>Elizabeth</i>	120		
Caithness (Tain)	<i>Three Brothers</i>	150	30	
Dumfries	<i>Kirkconnel</i>		60	19
Inverness	<i>Three Brothers</i>	120	31.5	
Irvine	<i>Endeavour</i>	100	26	
	<i>Leopard</i>	90		
Kirkcaldy	<i>Mary Galley</i>	220	56	
	<i>Isable</i>	200		
	<i>Lamb</i>	165		
	<i>Mary Frigate</i>	160		
Leith	<i>Lyon</i>	600	77	
	<i>Viceroy</i>	600		
	<i>Adventure</i>	300		
Montrose	<i>James</i>	350	37	
Port Glasgow	<i>Hopewell</i>	200	61	
	<i>American Merchant</i>	160		
	<i>Elizabeth</i>	160		
Greenock	<i>Resolution</i>	150	25	
Prestonpans	<i>Marion</i>	250	80	
	<i>Margaret</i>	250		

Source: BL Harlean MSS 6269



## Appendix C

Table: 5.4 Port of departure of Scottish masters eastwards through the Danish Sound 1685-1724

Year	Denmark	Sweden	Norway	Scotland	England	Holland	France	Portugal	other
1685		1	3	43			1	2	00
1686			3	45			1	1	0
1687			1	48			5		
1688				60	1		4		1
1689				36					
1690				18		1			0
1691				37					
1692				39	1				
1693				15		3			
1694				8					
1695				13					
1696				22					
1697				19					
1698				58		1	1		
1699		1		55		1	3	2	
1700				71		1	1		1
1701			1	49	1		3		
1702				45	1				
1703				41					
1704				43					
1705				46					
1706				44					
1707		2	1	60					
1708			1	35		1			
1709				29		1			
1710			1	32	2	1			
1711			4	62	1				
1712			10	64		1			
1713		1	7	65	5	1	11	2	
1714		3	4	61	14	2	1	1	
1715		3		59	3		3		
1716		1		40	4		2		
1717	1			45	1	1	1	1	
1718			1	39	2			1	
1719			4	64	8				
1720	1	3	11	57	4	1		6	
1721		3	2	88	3		1	1	
1722				83	2				
1723		1		58	8		1	2	2
1724		3	1	61	9	1	1		3

Source: *Danish Sound Tolls*. War years are in bold..



## Appendix C

Table: 6.3 Scottish letter of marque vessels 1756-63

Vessel	Description	Master(s)	Owner(s)
<i>Montrose</i> of Aberdeen	160 tons/20 men/16 guns	Archibald Greig	Captain & Alexander Livingstone
<i>Grand Tully</i> of Dundee	260 tons/120 men/16 guns	Robert Mawer	John Halliburton & Co.
<i>Alexander</i> of Leith	200 tons/40 men/16 guns	Robert Munro	William Alexander & Co.
<i>Little William</i> of Leith	300 tons/50 men/16 guns	John Murray	-do-
<i>Chistian snow</i> of Leith	150 tons/25 men/10 guns	George Watt	-do-
<i>Thistle snow</i> of Leith	200 tons/30 men/14 guns	John Murray	-do-
<i>Edinburgh</i> of Leith Cunninghame	220 tons/35 men/6 guns	Thomas Murray James Hamilton	Jas Montgomerie, Alex Andrew Ronaldson, Michael Angram John McLean (Jamacia)
<i>Elizabeth &amp; Mary</i> of Leith	210 tons/40 men/24 guns	?	?
<i>Achilles</i> of Port Glasgow	160 tons/37 men/10 guns	Robert Watson Daniel Graham	Richard & Alexander Oswald Thos Dunmore, Jas Denistoun John Stephenson
<i>Betty</i> of Port Glasgow	180 tons/30 men/6 guns	James Malcolm	John Coats or Coutts
<i>Binning</i> of Port Glasgow	150 tons/25 men/10 guns	James Colhoun	George Buchanan, David Dalzell James Simpson
<i>Bolling</i> of Port Glasgow	190 tons/40 men/ 8 guns	Robert Douglas	Andrew Ramsay, James Baird Jnr
<i>Buchanan</i> of Port Glasgow	200 tons/25 men/10 guns	Robert Steel	Andrew & George Buchanan Daniel Dalzell, James Simpson
<i>Cochran</i> of Port Glasgow	200 tons/32 men/8 guns	William Semple	Andrew Dreghorn, John Murdoch Andrew Cochran
<i>Duke of Cumberland</i> of Port Glasgow	250 tons/40 men/10 guns	Allan Stevenson	Archie Buchanan, Alex Seddis Hugh Brown, John Bowman
<i>Elizabeth</i> of Port Glasgow	200 tons/30 men/14 guns	William Noble	Hugh Wylie, James Dunlop
<i>George</i> of Port Glasgow	150 tons/24 men/10 guns	John McLean	George Kippen, Archibald Ingram John Glassford, Arthur Connell
<i>Glassford</i> of Port Glasgow	150 tons/40 men/6 guns	William Hume	John Glassford, John Munro John Davidson (of Carolina)
<i>Hope</i> of Port Glasgow	150 tons/26 men/10 guns	Alex Hutcheson	John Wallace
<i>Hyndman</i> of Port Glasgow	150 tons/40 men/14 guns	Neil Gillies	Alexander Houston
<i>Ingram</i> of Port Glasgow	200 tons/40 men/12 guns	Charles Grieg John Ritchie & Alex Campbell	John Glassford
<i>Jenny</i> of Port Glasgow	130 tons/40 men/6 guns	Arthur Tran	John Glassford
<i>Loudoun</i> of Port Glasgow	120 tons/30 men/4 guns	James King	James Denistoun, John Pagan John Stevenson
<i>Mars</i> of Port Glasgow	140 tons/30 men/12 guns	James Weir	James Angus, George Brown
<i>Matty</i> of Port Glasgow	210 tons/30 men/10 guns	John Douglas	Andrew Buchanan & Son Colin Campbell, Patrick Carrick ( St. Christ)
<i>Nancy &amp; Kitty</i> of Pt. Glasgow	160 tons/30 men/8 guns	John Tran	John Michael
<i>Royal Widow</i> of Port Glasgow	220 tons/30 mem/8 guns	Alex Hutchenson Wm Cunninghame	Thomas Wallace
<i>St. Andrew</i> of Port Glasgow	200 tons/50 men/14 guns	Hugh Wylie	James Dunlop, James Douglas George Anderson
<i>Spencer</i> of Port Glasgow	200 tons	? Riddell	
<i>Three Sister</i> of Port Glasgow	90 tons/26 men/10 guns	Robert Hill	John Baird Jnr, Alex & Wm Walker John Weir (Antigua)

Source: PRO HCA 26



## Appendix C

Table: 6.4 The marine owned by the ports of Scotland 1759-75

Year	Number	Tonnage	Crew	<i>aver t/n</i>	<i>aver t/c</i>
1759	909	47751	5398	52.53	8.85
1760	999	53912	5943	53.97	9.07
1761	1043	55821	6327	53.52	8.82
1762	1029	54766	6205	53.22	8.83
1763	1120	60253	6764	53.80	8.91
1764	1246	67005	7673	53.78	8.73
1765	1332	75750	8419	56.87	9.00
1766	1294	72807	8456	56.27	8.61
1767	1385	78375	8862	56.59	8.84
1768	1478	85066	9412	57.55	9.04
1769	1475	86369	9752	58.56	8.86
1770	1509	88846	9460	58.88	9.39
1771	1501	88452	9207	58.93	9.61
1772	1560	91470	9552	58.63	9.58
1773	1578	91721	9823	58.12	9.34
1774	1646	93341	9907	56.71	9.42
1775	1559	91330	10048	58.58	9.09

Source: GUL MSS 1075 hereafter referred to as 'Register of Shipping'



## Appendix C

Table: 6.5 Comparison of the Scottish Fleets by region 1712 &amp; 1759

Port	1712 Tonnage	1759 Tonnage	% 1712
9 Dunbar	640	1100	172%
25 Prestonpans	2082	393	19%
17 Leith	8202	6044	74%
5 Bo'ness	6913	4316	62%
3 Alloa	1976	1530	77%
15 Kirkcaldy	3867	3794	98%
4 Anstruther	2173	795	37%
<i>Total Forth Area</i>	<i>25853</i>	<i>17177</i>	<i>66%</i>
10 Dundee	2922	2500	86%
21 Perth	140	608	434%
18 Montrose	2669	1535	58%
1 Aberdeen	3408	4404	129%
12 Inverness	1136	280	25%
6 Caithness/Thurso	298	1146	385%
<i>Total East Coast</i>	<i>10573</i>	<i>10473</i>	<i>99%</i>
20 Kirkwall	265	545	206%
32 Zetland	118	0	0%
11 Ft. William	0	455	n/a
19 Oban	10	0	0%
<i>Total Highland &amp; Isles</i>	<i>393</i>	<i>1000</i>	<i>254%</i>
22 Upper Clyde*	5384	19425	361%
14 Irvine	2325	3543	152%
2 Ayr	372	635	171%
26 Rothesay	199	0	0%
7 Campbeltown	395	1378	349%
<i>Total Clyde</i>	<i>8675</i>	<i>24981</i>	<i>288%</i>
28 Stranraer	207	100	48%
29 Portpatrick	154	51	33%
31 Wigton	104	181	174%
16 Kirkcudbright	25	173	692%
8 Dumfries	132	166	126%
<i>Total Galloway</i>	<i>622</i>	<i>671</i>	<i>108%</i>
Total	43394	53604	124%

\* Port Glasgow &amp; Greenock

Source: Register of Shipping



## Appendix C

Table: 6.6 Comparison the Scottish fleet by sector 1759 and 1775

	Number	Tonnage	Crew	<i>Aver t/n</i>	<i>Aver t/c</i>
Foreign					
1759	380	29137	3015	76.60	9.60
1775	635	51448	4302	81.02	11.96
	<i>167%</i>	<i>177%</i>			
Coastal					
1759	431	14829	1685	34.41	8.80
1775	606	23979	2355	39.57	10.18
	<i>141%</i>	<i>162%</i>			
Fisheries					
1759	98	3785	698	38.62	5.42
1775	318	15903	3391	50.01	4.69
	<i>324%</i>	<i>420%</i>			

Source: Register of Shipping



## Appendix C

Table: 6.7 Numbers and tonnage of Scottish whalers and herring busses 1750-75

	Whalers			Herring Busses			Combined	
	Number	Tonnage	Aver Tons	Numbers	Tonnage	Aver Tons	Number	Tonnage
1750	1	333	333	0	0	0	1	333
1751	6	1933	322	2	148	74	8	2081
1752	10	3137	314	4	301	75	14	3438
1753	14	4294	307	8	519	65	22	4813
1754	15	4680	312	6	403	67	21	5083
1755	16	4964	310	1	77	77	17	5041
1756	16	4964	310	1	77	77	17	5041
1757	15	4531	302	2	103	52	17	4634
1758	15	4500	300	3	181	60	18	4681
1759	15	4480	299	3	181	60	18	4661
1760	14	4239	303	13	554	43	27	4793
1761	14	4239	303	17	745	44	31	4984
1762	14	4239	303	49	2056	42	63	6295
1763	10	3110	311	87	3691	42	97	6801
1764	10	3114	311	119	5131	43	129	8245
1765	8	2560	320	157	7056	45	165	9616
1766	9	2798	311	261	12476	48	270	15274
1767	9	2798	311	263	12556	48	272	15354
1768	9	2798	311	202	9553	47	211	12351
1769	9	2798	311	85	3868	46	94	6666
1770	9	2798	311	19	861	45	28	3659
1771	9	2798	311	29	1249	43	38	4047
1772	9	2798	311	165	7251	44	174	10049
1773	10	3017	302	190	8340	44	200	11357
1774	9	2774	308	249	11350	46	258	14124
1775	9	2774	308	281	13073	47	290	15847

Sources: Whalers - Board of Trade papers 6/93/98, 126 & 6/230, 76 (Jackson)

Herring busses - J. Knox, View of the British Empire, Vol.1. 'Report on the Herring Fisheries 1798 (Bigwood)



## Appendix C

Table: 6.8 Scottish whalers 1750-75

Vessel	First season	Known details
<i>Peggy</i> of Glasgow/ Bo'ness	1751	238 tons Captains Gray/ Hamilton /Reid
<i>Thistle</i> of Glasgow	1751	Captain Sands
<i>Glasgow Fisher</i> of Glasgow and Bo'ness	1751	Captain Ker
<i>Bo'ness</i> of Bo'ness		Lost in the ice 1758
<i>Tryall</i> of Leith	1750	333 tons/46 men Plantation built Edinburgh Whale Fishery Co.
<i>Leith</i> of Leith owners D.		335tons/44 men Plantation built Captain Al Cheyne & Ballantyne Loch & Co.
<i>Edinburgh</i> of Leith	1751	285 tons/ 43 men Plantation built Lost in the ice 1763
<i>Royal Bounty</i> of Leith Whale Fish Co.		330 tons/ 41 men Plantation built Captain William Kerr
<i>Royal Endeavour</i> of Leith		331 tons
<i>Campbeltown</i> of Campbeltown and Leith	1751	333 tons/ 40 men River built Captains Spencer & George Provane Acquired by the Edinburgh Whale Fishery Co. 1751
<i>Argyll</i> of Campbeltown and Leith	1751	299 tons/ acquired by the Edinburgh Whale Fishery Co. 1751
<i>St Anne</i> of Aberdeen	c.1756	Aberdeen Whale Fishery Co Captain Bretony
<i>City of Aberdeen</i> of Aberdeen	1753	343 tons/ 44 men Aberdeen Whale Fishery Co Ex-Whitby whaler
<i>Diana</i> of Aberdeen	1773	243 tons
<i>Grand Tully</i> of Dundee	1757	244 tons/ 36 men
<i>Dundee</i> of Dundee	1752	352 tons /48 men Newcastle built 1739 Dundee Whale Fishery Co. Captains William Logan & Thomas Robson Lost in the ice 1782
<i>Princess of Wales</i> of Dunbar	1755	344 tons Merse Whale Fish Co.
<i>Blessed Endeavour</i> of Dunbar	1755	316 tons Merse Whale Fish Co.
<i>North Star</i> of Dunbar	1755	295 tons Merse Whale Fish Co.

Source: SRO RH2/4 500-553, Victualling Bills, *Shipping Intelligence & Lloyd's Registers* & Jackson 'Scottish Whaling'



## Appendix C

Table: 7.1 Marine owned by the Scottish ports 1776-91

Year	Number	Tonnage	Crew	<i>aver t/n</i>	<i>aver t/c</i>
1776	1640	91502	10432	55.79	8.77
1777	1545	89029	10901	57.62	8.17
1778	1617	94915	11263	58.70	8.43
1779	1521	88323	10409	58.07	8.49
1780	1493	84343	9385	56.49	8.99
1781	1489	85541	9252	57.45	9.25
1782	1441	78027	8404	54.15	9.28
1783	1465	80134	8273	54.70	9.69
1784	1649	92849	9271	56.31	10.01
1785	1827	107979	10603	59.10	10.18
1786	1923	128164	12046	66.65	10.64
1787	2017	149324	13203	74.03	11.31
1788	2061	150838	13247	73.19	11.39
1789	2134	154905	13766	72.59	11.25
1790	2105	154409	12927	73.35	11.94
1791	2222	157098	13782	70.70	11.40

Source: Register of Shipping



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