

‘Hints towards Establishing a Woollen Manufacture’: Discovering Non-Landlord Economic Development in the Argyll Papers

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Historians of social life and economic change in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries have tended to focus on the improving efforts of the landed gentry. Building on recent work that explores economic development from the perspective of those lower down the social scale, such as tacksmen, this article uses evidence from the estate papers of the dukes of Argyll to explore the development of industrial woollen manufacturing in Kintyre by the merchant Daniel Clark, founder of the Achaleek Woollen Company. Though it ultimately failed, Clark’s project built on previous efforts to develop industrial woollen manufacturing in Argyll that were inspired by emerging Enlightenment political economy, a perspective that privileged agricultural improvement in the context of a discourse of national economic development. It is also an example of non-landlord improvement that so rarely makes it into the historiography of economic and social development of the Highlands and Islands.

The Inveraray Castle Archives are located in the Argyll Estates offices of Inveraray Castle, the family seat of the dukes of Argyll. The gothic-revival castle was built for the 3rd duke but completed by John, 5th Duke of Argyll (1723–1806), who is well known for his Enlightenment improvement zeal, concluding work on the modern town of Inveraray on the shores of Loch Fyne along those lines. The Argyll Papers reflect the historical importance of Clan Campbell over the past eight hundred years or so, and the papers are some of the richest and most complete archives of a landed family in Great Britain.² The archives are used by scholars and members of the public on topics as varied as social relations, demography, military and war, religion, language, genealogy, maps, and government policy, among many others.³ In particular, and the subject of this article, the archive has been used by historians of social life and economic change

¹ The author is grateful to Angus Nicol (may he rest in peace) of the Highland Society of London for facilitating a visit to the Inveraray Castle Archives in 2016 and Alison Diamond for her assistance in 2018.

² For an overview of the archive, see http://friendsoftheargyllpapers.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/AP_CollectionLevelDescription_Feb2014.pdf.

³ A. Tindley, M. Gibbard and A. Diamond, ‘Archived in the Landscape? Community, Family and Partnership: Promoting Heritage and Community Priorities Through the

in the Highlands and Islands during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.⁴ The focus of these inquiries has largely been the improving efforts of the landed gentry in Scotland, such as the dukes of Argyll. Very little has been written about non-landlord entrepreneurs who also engaged in improvement projects on Highland and Island estates. By using evidence found in the estate papers of the dukes of Argyll, this article will show that there is evidence that, in addition to landlords, entrepreneurs also spearheaded projects aimed at bringing economic development to an area that was a key location of the Highland improving movement.

The 5th Duke of Argyll is known for his improvement zeal not only on his own estates but also for being actively involved in some high-profile Highland improvement organisations. For example, he sat as president of the Highland Society of Scotland from its inception in 1784 to his death, was a member of the Highland Society of London (est. 1778), and a governor of the British Fisheries Society (est. 1786), in addition to being involved in a number of economic and infrastructural projects aimed at bringing prosperity to the Highlands and Islands in a time of economic uncertainty.⁵ Much has been written about economic improvement in the Highlands and Islands from the perspective of elites in the eighteenth century, though some recent work has been done from the viewpoint of those lower down the social scale, notably tacksmen improvers.⁶ Merchants and entrepreneurs, on the other hand, have received very little attention.

By making improvements a condition of leases in order to receive rent reductions or other favourable terms on certain farms, the 5th Duke ensured that some local

Argyll Estate Papers', *Archives and Records: The Journal of the Archives and Records Association*, 40:1 (2019), 5–20.

⁴ A. Macinnes, 'Landownership, Land Use and Elite Enterprise in Scottish Gaeldom: From Clanship to Clearance in Argyllshire, 1688–1858', in (ed.) T. M. Devine, *Scottish Elites* (Edinburgh, 1994), 1–42; E. R. Cregeen and A. Tindley, 'The Creation of the Crofting Townships in Tiree', *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies*, 35:2 (2015), 155–88; A. Tindley and E. Cregeen, 'A West Highland Census of 1779: Social and Economic Trends on the Argyll Estate', *Northern Scotland*, 5 (2014), 75–105.

⁵ The Duke was a major player in the construction of the Crinan Canal, for example. Originally designed by John Rennie and built by the Crinan Canal Company, construction began in 1794 and was completed c.1801/2. Its aim was to bring prosperity to the area by providing a safe transit route from Crinan to Ardrishaig in Argyll, linking the Inner Hebrides to the River Clyde, without having to make the long and sometimes dangerous trip around the Mull of Kintyre.

⁶ For landlord-led improvement see: A. Mackillop, 'Highland Estate Change and Tenant Emigration', in (ed.) T. M. Devine and J. R. Young, *Eighteenth Century Scotland: New Perspectives* (East Linton, 1999), 237–58; A. I. Macinnes, 'Commercial Landlordism and Clearance in the Scottish Highlands: the Case of Arichonan', in (ed.) J. Pan Montojo and K. Pedersen, *Communities in European History* (Pisa, 2007), 47–64; F. McKichan, 'Lord Seaforth and Highland Estate Management in the First Phase of Clearance', *Scottish Historical Review*, 86 (April 2007), 50–68. For recent work on tacksmen-led improvement see: J. Hunter, *Set Adrift Upon the World: The Sutherland Clearances* (Edinburgh, 2015); D. Taylor, *The Wild Black Region: Badenoch 1750–1800* (Edinburgh, 2016).

tenant farmers had a vested interest in his improvement vision. Local merchants also took advantage of (what will be termed here as) ‘improvement tacks’ and other schemes, developed by the Duke to incentivise improvement projects.⁷ This article examines an attempt by Daniel Clark, entrepreneur and founder of the Achaleek Woollen Company, to establish an industrial woollen mill near Campbeltown by renting an improvement tack from the Duke.⁸ Though attempts to make the project work ultimately failed as the terms of the tack proved too unrealistic for a new business, Clark’s project built on previous efforts to develop industrial woollen manufacturing in Argyll which were inspired by emerging Enlightenment political economy, a perspective that privileged agricultural improvement in the context of a discourse of national economic development.⁹ It is also an example of non-landlord improvement that so rarely makes it into the historiography of economic and social development of the Highlands and Islands.

By the end of the eighteenth century, the development of a woollen industry in the Highlands and Islands was a subject of great interest to the improvement organisations with which the 5th Duke was involved. Enlightenment political economy, which placed great importance on the improvement of native forms of agriculture in the Highlands and Islands as the solid foundation on which an industrial economy would grow, formed the basis for a new improving movement that considered the role of local economies in the development of a strong national economy.¹⁰ Thinkers like Dr James Anderson downplayed the imported industries that had formed the policies of government agencies and

⁷ Reverend John Smith, *Old Statistical Account*, XXXV, Parish of Campbelton (1794), 549; Tindley and Cregeen, ‘A West Highland Census of 1779’, 76. This was aided by the fact that the 2nd Duke (1703–43) had essentially abolished the privileged tacksman class on the Argyll estates by the late 1730s, leaving tacks and other large swaths of rentable land available to anyone who could pay the rent. These renters would be referred to as ‘tacksmen’ by virtue of renting a tack and not because they were a member of the old social class (*ibid.*, 78).

⁸ The farm is sometimes spelled ‘Achaleek’ in the documents, but for the sake of continuity Achaleek will be used here. The modern spelling is Auchaleek.

⁹ For more on the development of Scottish political economy see: (ed.) T. Sakamoto and H. Tanaka, *The Rise of Political Economy in the Scottish Enlightenment* (London, 2003).

¹⁰ B. Bonnyman, ‘Agricultural Enlightenment, Land Ownership and Scotland’s Culture of Improvement, 1700–1820’, in (ed.) M. Combe, J. Glass and A. Tindley, *Land Reform in Scotland: History, Law and Policy* (Edinburgh, 2020), 45–6. The most notable improver associated with Enlightenment political economy is Sir John Sinclair. His statistical analysis projects, including the *Old Statistical Accounts* and the surveys for the Board of Agriculture, were intended to be used, according to Sinclair, to develop ‘a New System of Political Economy, founded on statistical researches. It is proposed to begin with ascertaining the circumstances of every parish, or smaller district, – thence to proceed to county or provincial reports, – and then to a general report of the whole kingdom. In this way, the whole frame of human society will be anatomized, and the doctrines of political economy will be founded on what may be called Political Anatomy.’ Sir John Sinclair, *The Correspondence of Sir John Sinclair*, II (London, 1831), appendix, p. 38. C. W. J. Withers,

their supporters earlier in the century, such as the Board of Annexed Estates (1755–84), in favour of using native resources, especially wool, and native labour as a means to develop the Highlands and Islands industrially. As these theorists saw it, industrialisation was the solution to the problem of underdevelopment and poverty in the area.¹¹ That is not to say that woollen manufacturing had not existed in the Highlands and Islands prior to the late eighteenth century – it was a traditional industry, with the fulling, carding, spinning, and dyeing of wool being done largely by women in or near the home, and the men weaving the cloth primarily on a community-owned handloom. Though these local industries could not compete with the much larger woollen manufacturing industries in the Lowlands (woollen cloth manufacturing was an important part of the Lowland economy in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries until it was replaced by linen), they were nonetheless important traditional economic activities with the cloth, known for its high quality and durability, being sold throughout Scotland.¹² Some improvers argued that woollen manufacturing, as a traditional economic activity familiar to many Gaels, could easily be developed on an industrial scale. By contrast they pointed to linen production, as an imported industry, had failed due to it not having been traditionally practised in the area.¹³

Under the twenty-two-year presidency of the 5th Duke of Argyll, the Highland Society of Scotland (hereafter HSS) investigated the development of woollen manufacturing in the Highlands and Islands. Though the society was keen to promote the industry in general, in the 1790s it was particularly

‘National Identity and the Making of a Nation, 1690–1790’, *Journal of Historical Geography*, 21:4 (1995), 389–92.

¹¹ The landowner and political economy theorist, Dr James Anderson L.L.D (1739–1808), was a major influence on economic policies promoted by the Highland Society of Scotland and the Highland Society of London. Anderson’s political economy formed the basis of numerous published treatises in the 1770s and 1780s which advocated the use of native resources and native workers in industries specifically tailored for the Highlands and Islands, such as herring fishing and woollen manufacturing. He also argued for the removal of punitive taxes and duties imposed on necessary Highland goods such as coal and salt, which he claimed hindered development and contributed to unnecessary poverty. J. Anderson, *Observations on the Effects of the Coal Duty* (Edinburgh, 1792); J. Anderson, *Observations on the Means of Exciting a Spirit of National Industry* (Edinburgh, 1777); J. Anderson, *The True Interest of Great Britain Considered: Or a Proposal for Establishing the Northern Fisheries* (n.p., 1783). Other promoters of localised economic development in the Highlands and Islands who were connected to Anderson and the 5th Duke of Argyll included George Dempster (1732–1818), John Gray (1724–1811) and John Knox (1720–90). G. Dempster, *A Discourse Containing a Summary of the Proceedings of the Directors of the Society for Extending the Fisheries and Improving the Sea Coasts of Great Britain* (London, 1786), 33–4.

¹² W. H. K. Turner, ‘Wool Textile Manufacture in Scotland: and Historical Geography’, *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, 80:2 (1964), 81.

¹³ Aberdeen University Library Special Collections, MS960, John Mackenzie to Henry Dundas, ‘Reasons for Adopting a Small Measure of Very Considerable Effect in the Highlands’, 28 January 1786, 6.

interested in developing fine-woollen manufacturing, which it considered had the potential to provide a number of benefits. The society's *Report on Shetland Wool* (1790), argued that Great Britain had in the past produced some of the finest wool in Europe, and that this had formed the basis of the famous medieval wool trade.¹⁴ Over time, however, breeds of fine-woollen sheep had become diluted or eradicated in favour of the coarse-woollen 'improvement' sheep such as the Blackface then being raised in the Highlands.¹⁵ The Spanish had in the meantime become the European leader in the production of fine wool with their highly specialised Merino sheep, and would remain so for much of the eighteenth century.¹⁶ The committee members involved in the report (including Sir John Sinclair, Dr James Anderson, and a number of interested parties from Shetland) argued that the native fine-woollen sheep found in Shetland that had until recently survived unchanged should be protected from interbreeding and raised on the islands of Scotland to be used in a fine-woollen industry.¹⁷ The benefits of resurrecting a fine-woollen industry, the committee argued, would be twofold: rather than relying on imports from abroad, Britain could put an end to economic insecurity by utilising native agricultural products to supply its industrial development, and poverty in the Highlands and Islands could be

¹⁴ The Report led first to the creation of the British Wool Society (BWS) in 1791 and then the Board of Agriculture (BOA) in 1793. The BWS dissolved once the BOA was created. Royal Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland (hereafter RHASS), *Sederunt Book 2* (1789–1795), 103; Sir John Sinclair, *An Account of the Origin of the Board of Agriculture* (London, 1796), 6–9.

¹⁵ The wool of these new sheep was coarser and unsuited to fine wool cloth and goods, but was used for rougher woollen cloths and carpets. The wool was used locally and also exported to places such as Yorkshire for the textile mills. W. J. Carlyle, 'The Changing Distribution of Breeds of Sheep in Scotland, 1795–1965', *Agricultural History Review*, 27 (1979), 19–20; E. Richards, *The Highland Clearances* (Edinburgh, 2005), 68–72.

¹⁶ RHASS, *Sederunt Book 2* (1789–1795), 62. Though England dominated the medieval wool trade in the British Isles, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries Scotland's wool was considered good enough to create moderately fine-quality woollens. From the later fourteenth century, however, the Low Country and Florentine luxury woollen industries exclusively employed English wool. In the case of woollen manufacturing in late eighteenth-century Britain, worsted and broadcloth relied heavily on imported Merino wool from Spain, the supplies of which were constantly threatened by the geopolitical situation with France and its allies: (ed.) D. Jenkins, *The Cambridge History of Western Textiles*, I (Cambridge, 2003), 186. For an impressive overview of the Spanish wool trade, see C. Rahn Phillips and W. D. Phillips, *Spain's Golden Fleece* (Baltimore and London, 1997).

¹⁷ These sheep were likely descended or related to the Scottish Dunface, an ancient short-tailed sheep with short, fine wool that possibly gave rise to the Shetland sheep breed (now recognised) and other traditional Scottish speciality island breeds. The Dunface were slowly being replaced by the Blackface by the mid-eighteenth century (the Cheviots arrived after the 1790s), as commercial sheep-farming extended north during the early phase of the Highland Clearances. They disappeared from the mainland Highlands in the 1880s.

eliminated through the provision of employment. Instead of exporting wool as had been done in the past, the idea was to build a local industry that employed both local products and local workers.¹⁸ The HSS continued to support the development of woollen manufacturing in the Highlands and Islands through the first decades of the nineteenth century, which had expanded to include the manufacture of yarn and numerous types of clothing, but was still small scale and sold primarily by peddlers.¹⁹ However, the dream of bringing industrial woollen manufacturing to the area remained elusive.

The encouragement of industrial woollen manufacturing in Argyll in particular began with the establishment of the Inveraray Woollen Manufactory (IWM) in 1776.²⁰ The IWM was the brainchild of the 5th Duke and some local gentlemen who were interested in not only profiting from the endeavour but also providing employment, especially for local women and children in spinning wool. The Duke bankrolled the start-up and maintenance of the project including all infrastructure, machinery, fuel, premiums to encourage spinning, and wages. The concern was managed by a committee of local gentlemen directors including the Duke's younger brother, Lord Frederick Campbell, and his agent, James Ferrier. The venture was supported financially by a number of local subscribers.²¹ William Inglis, a merchant from Lanark, was brought in on a contract of nine years to oversee the day-to-day operations of the factory including training potential employees, finding local spinners, and tending to the buildings and machinery of the mill built at Claonairigh (Clunary), on the Douglas Water. The intention was that the mill would be primarily engaged in producing wool carpets and coarse cloths, hencal cottons or stockings, 'or such other goods as the subscribers and the said William Inglis, shall find work for the interest of the concern, all from wool spun at Inveraray or in the neighbourhood thereof', though there is no evidence that cotton goods were ever manufactured at the mill.²²

In its first two years of operation, the IWM struggled to be competitive. It faced a number of challenges, including poor management and cash flow, inadequate infrastructure and machinery (even by 1778 there was no fulling mill or a proper loom for carpets, for example), complaints over the poor quality of the broad cloth and carpets, and a lack of motivated locals to spin the wool

¹⁸ RHASS, *Sederunt Book 2* (1789–1795), pp. 103–5.

¹⁹ Highland Society of Scotland, *Prize Essays and Transactions of the Highland Society of Scotland*, II (Edinburgh, 1803), 243; Highland Society of Scotland, *Prize Essays and Transactions of the Highland Society of Scotland*, III (Edinburgh, 1807), xxviii.

²⁰ A small spinning factory was in operation briefly in 1774 at Inveraray on the middle floor of a building called 'Factory Land': F. A. Walker, with contributions by F. Sinclair, *Argyll and Bute* (London, 2000), 95.

²¹ Other directors in the early years were James Campbell of Silvercraigs, Donald Campbell of Lonachan and Robert Campbell of Asknish.

²² The Argyll Papers (hereafter AP), NRAS1209/E/3/6, Inveraray Woollen Manufactory Record [n.d. ~1778], 1–3.

into yarn.²³ In any case, the mill managed to produce small amounts of combed wool and narrow plain weave woollen cloth in its first couple of years, but its primary focus was on Scots carpets. From July 1777 to July 1778, for example, the IWM produced 6,962 yards of Scots carpets valued at £777 18s. 8d., with orders being sent to Glasgow, Greenock, and London. The majority of sales that year were sent to Amsterdam, though the Dutch market dried up shortly thereafter.²⁴ There was hope by the committee that Lord Frederick Campbell, who joined in 1778, would have the uniforms for his Argyll Fencibles made by the factory. However, although he ‘expressed the strongest desire to support the woollen manufactory, which has lately been established’, he could not commit to using the cloth produced for his fencible regiment’s uniforms ‘before the quality of the Cloath is better established and the Manufactory shall be able to undertake to supply the whole quantity required, which upon enquiry it appears at present can by no means be done’.²⁵ The IWM struggled through the 1790s, eventually shutting up shop by the early nineteenth century.²⁶ Another project was tried in Argyll in this era at Bonawe by the Lorn Furnace Company in the early 1780s ‘with the laudable view of furnishing employment to the wives and daughters of their workmen, and to the industrious poor around them’.²⁷ But like the IWM, the Bonawe woollen operation struggled to compete with the growing industrial centres in the Lowlands, which by this time no longer had to rely on the putting-out system thanks to advances in machine (especially steam-driven) technology.²⁸

²³ AP, NRAS1209/E/3/6, Inveraray Woolen Manufactory Record [n.d. ~1778], 12; 19–24; 36; 52–3; 72.

²⁴ Much of the profit that year went to offering higher wages to encourage spinners and waiting on payments from debtors. *Ibid.*, 18–21. Very little research has been done on the manufacture and export of Scots carpets. These were double-weave reversible rugs which were woven instead of made with pile, manufactured from c.1760 to 1930. For some information on the production of Scots carpets, see: V. Habib, ‘Axminster Carpet Manufacture in Edinburgh in the mid-18th Century’, *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, 135 (2005), 259–72. All monetary figures in this article are in sterling.

²⁵ AP, NRAS1209/E/3/6, Inveraray Woolen Manufactory Record [n.d. ~1778], 41–2.

²⁶ The entry for Inveraray in the *Old Statistical Account* mentions the difficulty the business was having as it was not being ‘conducted with advantage’, primarily from a ‘want of spinners’ who spent more time ‘preserving their peats’: Rev. Mr. Paul Fraser, ‘Inveraray, County of Argyll’, *Old Statistical Account*, V (1793), 297–8. The IWM is mentioned in an 1805 publication by John Smith, a minister at Campbeltown, for the Board of Agriculture. The publication was reprinted in 1813 with the section on the IWM, but it is not clear how long the factory existed after this date: J. Smith, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Argyll* (London, 1813), 302–3.

²⁷ J. Smith, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Argyll* (London, 1805), 303.

²⁸ The Lorn Furnace Company was an industrial complex founded by a Cumbrian ironmaster, located at the head of Loch Etive. The concern largely produced pig iron from 1752 to 1813, and ceased blasting in the 1870s. R. A. A. McGeachy, *Argyll 1730–1850: Commerce, Community and Culture* (Edinburgh, 2005), 148; T. C. Smout, *Exploring Environmental History: Selected Essays* (Edinburgh, 2009), 91.

It would take an ambitious merchant from Campbeltown, Daniel Clark, for an industrial woollen manufacturing operation to be tried once again in Argyll in the early nineteenth century.

Daniel Clark, a merchant and shipowner, had the idea for founding a woollen manufacturing company in Kintyre around 1805. He certainly did not seem to have prior experience with manufacturing, yet Clark decided to turn his attention to an industry that had hitherto only existed on a very small scale in the area.²⁹ It is possible that he had been inspired by ideas that had been circulating in the area in the early 1790s. In 1791, a certain Duncan Campbell of Campbeltown published a circular that conveyed the ideas for establishing woollen manufacturing in Kintyre originally laid out by the 5th Duke's chamberlain, Captain Humphrey Graham. Entitled 'Hints towards establishing a Woollen manufactory in Kintyre', the circular proposed that Campbeltown in particular was ideally situated for the wool trade not only as sheep stocks had of late been rising, ending the need to import wool from Ayrshire for the local trade (which were largely 'the coarse webs made by the farmers wives for the use of their families and a few pieces of plaiding for sale'), but also 'on account of the convenience of its harbour' (which had access to the Clyde and markets abroad, especially Ireland), 'cheapness of provisions, fuel and price of labour'.³⁰

Using similar arguments to the 1791 circular as to the benefits of establishing industrial woollen manufacturing in Kintyre, in early 1805 Clark began circulating handbills as far away as Glasgow to try to attract investors for his proposed business.³¹ In anticipation of support for his plans, Clark had already established a mill with an engine for carding wool on the farm of Drumalea on the Killarow water, roughly five miles away down a public road from Campbeltown.³² However, Clark had only been given permission by the tenants to build the mill; they had refused him the land needed to build accommodations and provide kitchen gardens for weavers.³³ Clark also aimed high for support for his project. First he approached the Board of Manufactures, outlining the advantages of assisting him in establishing a woollen manufacturing business in Kintyre, which he asserted 'is well calculated for a woollen manufactory, from its producing the raw material, its fertility of the soil, number of inhabitants and vicinity to Ireland, from whence a demand for woollen cloth may be expected'. Yet in spite of this, Clark argued, a number of factors had hindered

²⁹ AP, NRAS1209/501, Memorial of Mrs. Daniel Clark for the Farm at Achaleck, 1818.

³⁰ AP, NRAS1209/501, Hints towards Establishing a Woollen Manufacture in Kintyre, by Duncan Campbell, Campbeltown, 10 December 1791. Captain Humphrey Graham had sent a report on the subject some time earlier to a member of the Highland Society of London, Colonel Charles Campbell of Barbreck, who can be found on p. 6 of: Highland Society of London, *Rules of the Highland Society of London February 1, 1783* (London, 1783).

³¹ AP, NRAS1209/3117, Memorial of Daniel Clark Merchant of Campbeltown, 7 October 1805.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

the establishment of industry in the area, including a lack of workers and infrastructure, ‘especially in such a distant corner’ of the country. In order to ‘counterbalance the obstacles and establish the business at first on a respectable footing’, he asked the Board for a ‘liberal encouragement’ of over £1,195 for machinery and infrastructure.³⁴ That same day Clark wrote to James Ferrier, the Duke of Argyll’s agent, to ask his advice on the possibility of being funded by the Board. Ferrier was confident in the project and responded that he had sent a note to the secretary arguing that, in his opinion, Clark’s project was deserving of support not only from the Board but also the Duke of Argyll himself. However, Ferrier seemed unsure that the Board was going to support Clark’s venture as they tended not to fund infrastructure (especially buildings), and he suspected Clark would not get much more than £70 or £80 from them. Perhaps armed with the confidence that Ferrier had given him that there was a possibility that the 5th Duke would likely support his venture, Clark then wrote to the Duke directly, referring to the proposal he had sent to the Board:

along with a copy of a letter to Mr. Ferrier and his answer, on the subject of establishing a woollen manufactory in the district of Kintyre, from which your Grace will be pleased to observe Mr. Ferrier is of the opinion that the scheme undertaken by the memorialist is deserving of encouragement from your Grace, as well from the Board of Trustees, and that in consequence of his acquainting them of his sentiments they have delayed deciding on what their encouragement is to be, until your Grace’s pleasure is first known.³⁵

Clark appealed to political economy as a tactical argument when he wrote to the Duke by citing a number of great advantages in supporting his venture, such as ‘employing a number of useful hands and aiding materially in the manufacture and sale of wool, one of the chief commodities of the country, much tend[s] to the gradual rise of rents and advancement of trade and agriculture’. He also informed the Duke that he had already chosen a logical farm with which to expand his operations, the farm of Achaleek, which was even more conveniently located near Campbeltown than his present mill operation. At the time the farm was being held by Clark’s mother-in-law, the widow of Dr Lachlan Campbell (whose daughter, Isabella, Clark had married in

³⁴ AP, NRAS1209/3117, Copy Memorial to Hon.ble Board of Trustees by Daniel Clark Merch.t Campbeltown with copies of letters to and from Mr. Ferrier on the subject of establishing a Woollen Manufactory in Kintyre, 1805. The Board of Trustees for Fisheries, Manufactures and Improvements in Scotland was established in 1727 with the original remit of encouraging agricultural improvement, fishing and linen manufacturing. By the late eighteenth century, the Board was tasked with encouraging of all kinds of industry (including wool) in order to help Scotland industrialise in line with that of England. C. A. Whatley, A. Skinner, W. H. Fraser and C. Lee, ‘Economic Policy’, *The Oxford Companion to Scottish History* (Oxford, 2001; published online 2007).

³⁵ AP, NRAS1209/3117, Memorial of Daniel Clark Merchant of Campbeltown, 7 October 1805.

1801); three years remained on the lease.³⁶ These arguments seem to have been sufficient, and the following spring Ferrier presented Clark with a proposal from the Duke for an improvement tack to begin on Whitsunday 1808.³⁷ It is relevant to note here that the Duke seems to have had some reservations about the operation taking place on this particular farm. In private written conversations between two of his chamberlains it is clear that the Duke expressed doubt that the farm was the best situation for a woollen manufactory and therefore he wanted to ensure that he was not ‘undervalued in the transaction’. In spite of this, the Duke did not want anything at all negative said to Clark about the matter so as to discourage him from undertaking the operation ‘as his Grace is desirous to encourage such undertakings in difficult quarters of Argyllshire’.³⁸

Contract negotiations for the improvement tack of Achaleek began in April 1806 between Clark and James Ferrier, and lasted for almost seven months. Just over one month into those negotiations, however, the 5th Duke passed away, and his son George Campbell (1768–1839) assumed the title of the 6th Duke of Argyll. Ferrier remained the Duke’s agent and was thus still in charge of contract negotiations. What is clear, however, is as Clark struggled to make the business work (see below), the 6th Duke appears to have been more interested in his own financial compensation and less concerned with supporting the improvement vision of his father.³⁹ The tack presented to Clark stipulated that the rent of the farm was set at £200 (well above what the Duke got from the Campbells) and a premium for the Duke (in lieu of a rent reduction) was to be laid on each stone of wool up to 2,000 stones. Clark would be contractually obligated to manufacture cloth using a minimum of 1,000 stones of wool on average per year (which would yield approximately 18,000 yards of ‘plaiden cloth’) for the first nineteen years. He was also to construct all the necessary buildings, including accommodations for workers and all machinery, and to hire a certain number of workers. The lease was to begin Whitsunday 1808 for nineteen years, renewable (and transferable to the people of his choosing in case of death) if the operation was deemed to be successful (if a minimum of 1,000 stones of wool were used each year). If the venture failed, due for example to not using the minimum weight of wool or hiring enough workers, Clark would have to forfeit the lease with only six months’ notice, be removed from the farm and pay £100 in damages on top of the rent

³⁶ Ibid; *The Scots Magazine*, 63 (Edinburgh, 1801), 800. Auchaleek is about two miles outside of Campbeltown.

³⁷ AP, NRAS1209/3117, Memorial for Daniel Clark to the Duke of Argyll, October 1806.

³⁸ AP, NRAS1209/3117, Copy Lt. Colonel Graham to Captain Stewart Limecraigs, 18 March 1806; AP, NRAS1209/3117, Copy Lt. Colonel Graham to Captain Stewart Limecraigs, 31 March 1806.

³⁹ Only scant biographical research has been done on George Campbell, 6th Duke of Argyll, but what seems to be clear is that he was largely occupied with his political career for most of his adult life. ‘CAMPBELL, George William, Mq. of Lorne (1768–1839), of Inveraray Castle, Argyll’, <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1790-1820/member/campbell-george-william-1768-1839>.

up until his removal. He was, however, to be given the cost of any buildings he put up as compensation for his efforts, with a value not exceeding £200.⁴⁰

After some careful negotiations, Clark managed to wrangle modifications to some of the terms he felt threatened the viability of his operation and which could put him into financial ruin, namely the minimum amount of wool he was required to use, the minimum number of workers, and the clause that would evict him with only six months' notice. This would allow Clark more flexibility and to work within the demands of the market.⁴¹ The finalised tack that was entered into in April and May 1807, stated that Clark was given a

lease for 19 years from Whitsunday 1808, and for other 19 years upon erecting houses for the accommodation of as many persons as shall be found necessary to weave and make at least 12,000 yards of cloth annually – on which quantity one penny per yard was to be allowed as a premium for your Grace

but not exceeding on average £50 per annum. There were four important stipulations: he had to use wool produced in Argyllshire; he was only allowed to assume a partner or partners in the operation 'to the extent of half the concern' (this was because the 6th Duke was the permanent partner in the other half); he had to use coal from the Duke's coal mines; and he was not allowed to sublease the farm.⁴²

For the next few years, Clark worked towards establishing his woollen manufacturing operation; however, by 1814 there were already serious problems. He was already in debt to the sum of £6,000 (his debts would increase to at least £10,000 by 1817) because he had spent, for example, an enormous amount of money building not only his own house but also the houses for his workers and the machinery for the mills, which he claimed were 'capable of manufacturing more than double the [12,000 yards] of cloth annually'. The water supply was also insufficient 'particularly during the spring and summer months', and the town's corn miller had a monopoly over the only loch nearby, preventing Clark from building up a reservoir; this lack of water caused work to cease for much of the time. He pleaded to the 6th Duke to alter the lease to allow him to have as

⁴⁰ AP, NRAS1209/3117, Memorial of Daniel Clark to the Duke of Argyle, 10 April 1806; AP, NRAS1209/3117, Memorial for Daniel Clark to the Duke of Argyle, October 1806; AP, NRAS1209/3117, Memorial of Daniel Clark to the Duke of Argyle, 29 November 1806. A stone in Scotland was equal to sixteen Scottish pounds weight (the equivalent of 7.936 kg), <http://www.scan.org.uk/measures/weight.asp>.

⁴¹ These three particular alterations were agreed upon by the 5th Duke shortly before his death. AP, NRAS1209/3117, Memorial for Daniel Clark to the Duke of Argyle, 29 November 1806.

⁴² AP, NRAS1209/3117, Memorial for Daniel Clark Tacksman of Auchinleck and Woolen manufacture there, 1814; AP, NRAS1209/3117, Memorial in regard to the Lease of Achaleck farm granted by His Grace the Duke of Argyll to Daniel Clark Merchant at Campbeltown dated April and May 1807, 1817; AP, NRAS1209/3117, Memorial for the Duke of Argyll and his Trustee, 7 January 1818.

many partners as necessary in order to buy a steam engine and more machinery, with the promise that this would mean increased premiums for the Duke.⁴³ This request appears to have fallen on deaf ears as no such accommodation was made. In any case, in keeping within the terms of the tack, Clark sought investment to try to alleviate his debts. That year, he established the Achaleek Woollen Company with twenty investors buying shares of £200 each; in addition, he sold off all of the other businesses he had held in Campbeltown.⁴⁴ These were incredible financial risks that Clark was willing to undertake in order to make the concern profitable, similar to some landlord improvers of the time.⁴⁵

However, Clark's troubles were not over. Another strategy he had tried in order to raise much-needed capital to continue the woollen manufactory was to surreptitiously sublease the farm to a John Fleming, 'reserving to himself only his dwelling house with a field of grass and the houses connected to the manufactory'. Clark tried to get away with it by claiming that Fleming was a co-partner in the concern. This, and the fact that Clark was making a profit from the sublease, was the final straw for the 6th Duke and he sought to have Clark removed.⁴⁶ To no doubt add to Clark's misery, the Achaleek Woollen Company having been dissolved in January 1817, his co-partners in the concern sued him leading to his bankruptcy 'and the sequestration of his estate and appointment of a trustee for his creditors'.⁴⁷ According to his former partners, Clark had concealed the great amount of debt he was in when the company was formed, even misleading them into thinking he was making a profit in a promising business so that they would be duped into investing in a failing concern. They also accused him of taking the investment money and using it 'to serve his own purposes'.⁴⁸ According to his wife, there had been a misunderstanding between Clark and the partners as to what the investment money was to cover, and besides, three of the investors were themselves insolvent. She also claimed that the partners who were supposed to erect the new machinery delayed installation for upwards of a year, causing a major loss of work.

⁴³ John Boyd Greenshields, of Drum, 'Unto the Right Honourable the Lords of Council and Session, the Petition & Complaint of Messrs John Downie, and Robert Tennent, Jun. Merchants in Glasgow, for themselves, and the other Partners of the late Achaleek Woollen Company, Creditors of Daniel Clark, late Manager of the Woollen Concern carried on at Achaleek, near Campbeltown', 17 December 1817, 2-3, available at: *Scottish Court of Session Digital Archive, The University of Virginia Law Library*, <http://scos.law.virginia.edu>; AP, NRAS1209/3117, Memorial for Daniel Clark Tacksman of Auchinleck and Woolen manufacture there, 1814.

⁴⁴ It appears that Clark was only supposed to have up to twelve investors as the concern was divided up into twenty-four shares at £200 each. *Ibid.*; AP, NRAS1209/3117, The Memorial of Isabella Campbell Spouse of Daniel Clark Tacksman of Achaleek near Campbeltown, 1817.

⁴⁵ See for example: F McKichan, 'Lord Seaforth and Highland Estate Management'.

⁴⁶ Greenshields, 'Unto the Right Honourable the Lords of Council and Session', 3; AP, NRAS1209/3117, Memorial for the Duke of Argyll and his Trustee, 7 January 1818.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Greenshields, 'Unto the Right Honourable the Lords of Council and Session', 3.

In any case, Clark was thrown in jail shortly after the company dissolved, and he was still there three months later in March 1817.⁴⁹ All of these circumstances led to the dissolution of the tack, and Clark was officially removed as of January 1818.⁵⁰

It is not clear what happened to Daniel Clark after his disastrous attempt to establish an industrial woollen mill near Campbeltown. Aside from the no doubt humiliating public notice of his bankruptcy in major Scottish publications such as *The Edinburgh Gazette* and the *Edinburgh Magazine*, the documentary trail goes cold.⁵¹ After some mild interest in the farm by a couple of local tenant farmers, the tack of the Achaleek Woollen Company was taken over by an entrepreneur farmer called Archibald Sellars in 1825 for a period of twenty-one years, and from January 1832 to September 1835, Sellars manufactured 15,426¼ yards of woollen cloth. The company lasted until at least the mid-1840s.⁵²

By digging a little deeper into estate archives such as the Inveraray Castle Archives, it is possible to find evidence that economic and social improvement in the Highlands and Islands was not always led by landlords. The 5th Duke of Argyll was heavily involved in not only working with his agents, managers and notable improvement organisations, as well as incentivising tenant farmers, to try bring economic prosperity (as they saw it) to an area that seemed to be lagging behind the rest of the country, but also, as this article demonstrates, working with entrepreneurs to develop local industries. Using ideas of Enlightenment political economy which circulated through improvement organisations like the Highland Society of Scotland, a more tailored approach to economic development was tried in parts of the Highlands and Islands, with an end goal of ensuring the area made a meaningful contribution to the rise of industrial development that occupied the minds of many British improvers of the day. This included the 5th Duke incorporating incentives for rent reduction by making improvements in the conditions of some leases. The tack of Achaleek fits within these economic discourses. The vision of industrial woollen manufacturing on an improvement tack near Campbeltown was unfortunately untenable without sustained support. Despite pouring everything he had into the venture, Daniel Clark clearly did not have the resources to develop the business and it failed before it even began. George Campbell, 6th Duke of Argyll, whose concern the tack became very shortly after his father passed away, seems to have been less motivated to make concessions to Clark in order to ensure that the venture was a success, and realise the 5th Duke's vision of bringing industrial woollen manufacturing to Kintyre.

⁴⁹ AP, NRAS1209/3117, The Memorial of Isabella Campbell Spouse of Daniel Clark Tacksman of Achaleek near Campbeltown, 1817.

⁵⁰ AP, NRAS1209/3117, Memorial for the Duke of Argyll and his Trustee, 7 January 1818.

⁵¹ *The Edinburgh Magazine and Literary Miscellany*, 89–90 (January–June 1822), 278. The documentary trail for Clark's wife, Isabella Campbell, also disappears after this date.

⁵² AP, NRAS1209/3154, Tack of the Achaleek Woolen Company 21 years from Whitsunday 1825 (expires 1846); AP, NRAS1209/3154, An account of all woolen cloth manufactured for Archibald Sellars Tacksman of the Auchaleek manufactory from January 1832 to 3rd September 1835; AP, NRAS1209/3124 [from the survey list], Memorial for the Auchaleek Woollen Company, 19 November 1844.