

The Campbeltown Declaration and its Printer

R. H. Carnie

THE *Campbeltown Declaration* is the name commonly given to a manifesto published in 1685 by the Earl of Argyle proclaiming the ill-fated rebellion of which he was the leader. The anonymous quarto pamphlet, which is probably of joint authorship,¹ is twelve pages long, has no title-page, and begins with a lengthy head-title on the recto of the first leaf:

The declaration and apology of the Protestant people, that is, of the noblemen, barons, gentlemen, burgesses and commons of all sorts now in arms within the kingdome of Scotland, with the concurrence of their true and faithfull pastors & of severall gentlemen of the English nation joined with them in the same cause, for the defence & relief of their lives, rights and liberties, and recovery and reestablishment of the true Protestant religion, in behalf of themselves & all that shall joyn with them and adhere to them.

The rest of the pamphlet is an elaboration of this concise statement of the aims and motives of the rebels against the government of James II. The pamphlet ends with a colophon which reads: 'Printed at *Campbell-Toun*, in Kintyre, in the Shire of Argyll Anno 1685'.

This historical rarity survives in only two copies and has been the subject of two communications to Scottish bibliographical societies. William Brown's paper to the Edinburgh Bibliographical Society² described the physical characteristics of the Makellar Library copy, and, in Brown's words, stated a few facts 'in support of the genuineness of the imprint, and to settle as nearly as possible the day of issue'. There was no regular printing press at Campbeltown in the seventeenth century. W. J. Couper gave to the Glasgow Bibliographical Society³ a general historical

account of the disastrous rebellion, and commented briefly on, in a characteristic mixture of research and incautious speculation, Argyle's arrangements for the provision of a printer and a press for the rebels. Couper also made the first serious attempt to establish a reliable chronology for the short-lived rebellion.

The purpose of the present article is to gather together the biographical facts concerning the printer of the *Campbeltown Declaration*, and to try and place them within a reliable chronology of the rebellion. These fugitive facts were apparently not available to either Brown or Couper. The known surviving copies of the *Declaration* are now in the National Library of Scotland and at Haigh Hall.⁴ No copy is known to have survived of another item said to have been issued at Campbeltown from the same press. This was the Earl of Argyle's *personal* statement of his reasons for rebellion, as opposed to the *general* manifesto of the rebels as a group. This personal statement was quoted in a number of contemporary pamphlets,⁵ and the document, referred to by Fountainhall in his *Historical Observes*⁶ as the 'short' declaration, was republished by the ecclesiastical historian, Wodrow, as an appendix to his *History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland*.⁷

Fountainhall was the first historian to assert that Argyle had brought his printing press with him from Holland, and to announce the fact that the unidentified printer was taken prisoner during the rebellion. He says of Argyle: '[He] was so conceitty that he had neir 20 severall pockets, some of them very secret in his coat and breeches, and brought a printing presse with him, and artificiall bullets and pistols'.⁸ Fountainhall also reported that: 'Argyle was apprehended running away from his men, and lieving them, not dying upon their bed as Catiline (teste Sallustio) did; as also his printer is tane who had printed his long and short declarations, and many of the common people'.⁹ Argyle paid the final penalty for his rebellious acts on 30 June 1685. The subsequent fate of, and the identity of, the captured printer escaped both Brown and Couper. Couper did speculate however, on the basis of the information available to him, on the nationality of the anonymous printer. He suggested that the high standard of correctness in the use of Scots/English in the *Campbeltown Declaration* led to the conclusion: 'the probabilities are that the printer was a Scot'.¹⁰ Couper was under the impression that the identity and nationality of the printer could not be established because the Privy

Council records for the period were missing, however, and they give a partial history, thus establishing beyond doubt that he was a Scot, as Willemssen. The surviving records show that he was presumably a scaled down version of the printer Willemssen brought with him.¹¹

On 22 and 23 June 1685, a number of prisoners from Glasgow and were imprisoned in Edinburgh. Statements about their various parts of the rebellion were Scots but at least four were Dutch prisoners, one Jan Yeason and three hundred Scots and fifteen Dutchmen were taken to Holland in his small fleet of ships. Another non-Scot: 'Geeills Willamson' was taken to Jacob Vandervelda,¹² bookseller in Edinburgh, by Argyle by his master to attend him with a printer and was hyred for tuo ducats douns a week. He took him under his pay and conveyed him to Villie with him and then returnd to Amsterdam. The word Engleish and so knew not what he was. These declarationes at Campbeltoun are all in English and that he did cast off eight hundred men. The experiment was presumably made through the incompleteness, it seems to provide additional puzzles associated with the *Campbeltown Declaration*. Testimony that he printed declarations, proofread by Argyle himself, seems to suggest that they were printed at Campbeltown. It seems to suggest that Argyle proofread a number of the declarations. The fact that Argyle himself did not actively solve Couper's problem about the printer setting Scots/English.

The Privy Council and Town Council decided the fate of the Scotsmen & Englishmen. Rumbold were executed; some of Argyle's group of forty-five being sent to Jamaica and some free. The Dutch prisoners, however, were

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Council records for the period were missing. Some records have survived,
however, and they give a partial history of the printer at Campbeltown,
establishing beyond doubt that he was a Dutchman named Gilles
Willemsen. The surviving records shed no light, alas, on the 'little' press,
presumably a scaled down version of the common wooden press, which
Willemsen brought with him.¹¹

On 22 and 23 June 1685, a number of Argyle's rebels were brought
from Glasgow and were imprisoned at Edinburgh where they made
statements about their various parts in the rebellion. Most of these
prisoners were Scots but at least four of them were Dutch. One of the
Dutch prisoners, one Jan Yeason from Groningen, testified that a
hundred Scots and fifteen Dutchmen had come with Argyle from
Holland in his small fleet of ships. Also reported is a deposition by
another non-Scot: 'Geeills Willamsone, printer, a Dutchman, servant to
Jacob Vandervelda,¹² bookseller in Amsterdam, and was sent with
Argyle by his master to attend him with a little press and some typs [sic],
and was hyred for tuo ducats douns a week, and that a Scots merchant
took him under his pay and conveyed him aboard and came the lenth of
Villie with him and then returnd to Amsterdam; declares he knows not a
word Engleish and so knew not what he wes to doe and that he printed
these declarationes at Campbeltoun and that Argyle himself corrected
them and that he did cast off eight hundred copies'.¹³ Willemsen's state-
ment was presumably made through a translator. Despite its
incompleteness, it seems to provide adequate explanations of some of the
puzzles associated with the *Campbeltown Declaration*. Willemsen's
testimony that he printed declarationes (in the plural), which were
proofread by Argyle himself, seems to confirm that *two* declarations
were printed at Campbeltown. It seems most unlikely that Willemsen is
suggesting that Argyle proofread a multiplicity of copies of a *single*
declaration. The fact that Argyle himself acted as a proofreader effec-
tively solves Couper's problem about a Dutch printer's difficulties in
setting Scots/English.

The Privy Council and Town Council records make reasonably certain
the fate of the Scotsmen & Englishmen amongst the rebels. Argyle and
Rumbold were executed; some of Argyle's followers were transported, a
group of forty-five being sent to Jamaica, and others were eventually set
free. The Dutch prisoners, however, were something of an embarrassment

to the Privy Council in view of the delicate diplomatic relations between Holland and Britain at this time. The secretary of the Privy Council sent a series of letters in the months following the capture of the rebels to the Lords Secretaries of State in London asking 'to know his Majesties pleasure anent the disposall of these Dutchmen taken with late Argyle'.¹⁴ A letter dated 3 September 1685, specifically mentions 'ane addresse made this day to the Committie [sic] of Council by one of these Dutchmen named Gillies Williamsons'. This supplication¹⁵ has not survived, although a later one (internally dated) has. Willemsen's first petition was unsuccessful. According to a judgment dated 15 October 1685: 'The Lords of His Majesties Privy Council, having considered the petition of Elias [sic] Williamson, Dutchman, printer, supplicating for libertie in regard he is in a starveing condition and is heartily sorie for his being with the late Argyle, doe refuse the desire as to libertie untill his Majesties pleasure be known anent these Dutchmen, but appoints the keepers of the tolbooth where he is prisoner to furnish him a groat a day for his menteanance, to be allowed to the said keeper at fitting of accounts upon occasions of this nature'.¹⁶ The clerk of the Privy Council was still writing letters to London in December 1685 asking for instructions about the Dutch prisoners. A further supplication by Willemsen can apparently be dated 3 December 1685; a dating confirmed by the reference within it to the fact that Willemsen had been twenty-four weeks in prison. It is reproduced below. Willemsen makes statements in this supplication which are slightly at variance with those made in his earlier deposition. There is less here about: 'he knew not what he wes to do'; and more emphasis on having been forced into illegal acts. Willemsen's account of being taken to Scotland when he thought he was going to Friesland;¹⁷ of attempting to escape and being forced to print by having the muzzles of guns pressed to his chest; and of his refusal to carry arms, may be literal truth, but may also reflect the desperate desire of the imprisoned printer to be released before he died of fever and starvation. The account is recorded thus:

Supplication by Alice (*sic*) Williamsons, sometime printer in Amsterdame, now prisoner in the tolbooth of Edinburgh, as follows: 'Being hyred by one Jacob Vanderfe¹⁸ to have gone into Freezland to print to him for the space of ane year, he ingagged with him, not in the leist knowing

of the drift of the said Jacob, sua th
to goe for Freezland he wes unawa
when they brought him ashore he kn
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would kill him unless he would print
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apprehended by his Majesties forces
prison, quher he now lyes in a pitiefu
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prison, he hes never once been heard
found guilty if the world can lay any
and so sett at liberty.' He therefore c
suffer anything if found guilty, but if
ships for his liberty. (Signed) 'Gillis
Alice Williamsons: Clerks to wreate.

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correction house. In making a plea to
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of the drift of the said Jacob, sua that goeing aboard (as he thought) to goe for Freezland he wes unawaris brought into Scotland, quher when they brought him ashore he knew not in the least wher he wes, far les who they who brought him came about; nevetheless at lenth he knew that he wes in Scotland, and presently endeavoured with all his might to escape and gett home agane, [but] they detained him and brought him to Argyl, quher he wes by him commanded to print quhat should be given him. He declared he would print none, quherupon they presented the missells of their guns to his breast swearing they would kill him unless he would print, and thereafter thinking to force him cary armes, viz., a fuzie, he made his escape from them, bot alace not out of Scotland, for as he wes traveling near to Glasgow he wes apprehended by his Majesties forces and brought him to Edinburgh prison, quher he now lyes in a pitiefull conditione, being (besyds cold and want of meat and cloathes) languishing in a most fierie sueity quhich with want of attendance, he haveing noe body here to oun him, renders him most miserable. Morover he hes lyen these 24 weeks in prison, he hes never once been heard nor examined either therby to be found guilty if the world can lay any thing to his charge or innocent and so sett at liberty.' He therefore craves to be examined, for he wil suffer anything if found guilty, but if innocent he will bless their Lordships for his liberty. (Signed) 'Gillis Willemsen.' [On the back] '1685. Alice Willemsone: Clerks to wreate.' [December 1685].¹⁹

I have not been able to discover anything further about the fate of the unhappy Gilles Willemsen, who may well have died during his lengthy incarceration. It is possible that he survived if he was one of the fifty prisoners who were put into the care of Robert Moubray, keeper of the correction house. In making a plea to be made a gildbrother *gratis* in 1688, Moubray reminded Edinburgh Town Council that fifty rebels had been sent to him after the Earl of Argyle's rebellion for three months. Forty-five of them were transported to Jamaica and the remaining five were maintained by him in the correction house for eight or nine months more until their release.²⁰ If Willemsen was one of these five, he may have managed to return to Holland. The Privy Council records describe him, however, as a prisoner in the Tolbooth and not in the correction

house, and it is ominous that his name is not amongst these recorded Dutch prisoners who were released.²¹

Willemsen's testimonies do provide some additional evidence as to the date and place of printing of the 'long' and 'short' declarations, although that evidence is inconclusive. Willemsen nowhere suggests that any printing was done during the voyage, or at any of the Scottish landing points previous to the landfall at Campbeltown, although there clearly had been time for printing to have been done in Lorne or Islay.²² The other eye-witnesses seem to support this. Erskine of Carnock says the fleet landed at Campbeltown on 20 May 1685, and Sir Patrick Hume, who accompanied the expedition and later escaped, stated: 'Wee landed at Cambeltoone and there we printed our declaration'.²³ It seems impossible, therefore, that either the versions of the rebels' manifesto which were in the Privy Council's hands in Edinburgh on 18 May, or the papers in James II's hands in London on 22 May, were copies of the ones printed at Campbeltown, and we must assume, I think, earlier versions printed in Holland. Couper suggested that the 'short' or 'personal' declaration was printed at Tarbert before it was distributed there.²⁴ Argyle's forces left Campbeltown on 26 May. Although Argyle was not captured until 18 June, there is no reason to suppose that the press and printer went everywhere with him. In fact there is a good deal of evidence that the invading forces were rapidly fragmented. According to Erskine, copies of a declaration were still being printed at Campbeltown on 25 May 1685.²⁵ Another Dutchman, a buttonmaker and servant to Argyle, records that he had ran away, been captured, and escaped again during the period Argyle was printing his declaration, but unfortunately no dates are given for these escapades. He, like Willemsen, had attempted to get to Glasgow before he was captured by government forces.²⁶

Until further evidence is produced, it seems sensible to assume that both the *Campbeltown Declaration* and Argyle's 'short' declaration were printed by Gilles Willemsen at Campbeltown between 20 and 25 May 1685.

CHRONOLOGY 2 May 1685 — 31 December 1685.
 2 May 1685 The Earl of Argyle's expedition lies off Amsterdam.

6 May 1685 The fleet reaches
 becomes known to
 11 May 1685 The fleet enters the
 13 — 19 May 1685 Rebel forces on L
 20 May 1685 Argyle force lands
 is read at the Mar
 20 — 25 May 1685 *Campbeltown Dec*
 21 May 1685 Declaration is
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 22 May 1685 News of landing
 Reference is mad
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 20 June 1685 The Earl of Argyle
 22 — 23 June 1685 Depositions take
 Edinburgh Tolboo
 printer.
 29 June 1685 Order from the Lo
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 Argyle is executed.
 30 June 1685 Privy Council of
 20 August 1685 Secretaries of State
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 3 September 1685 Privy Council again
 Dutch prisoners. V
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 15 October 1685 Lords of Privy Cou
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| 6 May 1685 | The fleet reaches the Orkney Isles and its presence becomes known to the Scottish authorities. |
| 11 May 1685 | The fleet enters the Sound of Mull. |
| 13 — 19 May 1685 | Rebel forces on Lorne and Islay. |
| 20 May 1685 | Argyle force lands at Campbeltown. A declaration is read at the Market Cross. |
| 20 — 25 May 1685 | <i>Campbeltown Declarations</i> printed by Willemsen. |
| 21 May 1685 | Declaration is read in the Parish Church, Campbeltown, Earl of Argyle makes personal declaration to his own people, which is then printed. |
| 22 May 1685 | News of landing is announced in London. Reference is made to treasonous declarations, presumably taken from versions published before the landing at Campbeltown. |
| 20 June 1685 | The Earl of Argyle brought to Edinburgh Castle. |
| 22 — 23 June 1685 | Depositions taken from rebel prisoners in Edinburgh Tolbooth including Gilles Willemsen, printer. |
| 29 June 1685 | Order from the Lords of Justiciary for the execution of the Earl of Argyle. |
| 30 June 1685 | Argyle is executed. |
| 20 August 1685 | Privy Council of Scotland writes to Lords Secretaries of State, London, for instructions on how to deal with the Dutch prisoners. |
| 3 September 1685 | Privy Council again writes to London about the Dutch prisoners. Willemsen submits petition to Privy Council. |
| 15 October 1685 | Lords of Privy Council refuse Willemsen's petition to be set free until His Majesty's pleasure be known with regard to the Dutch prisoners. |
| 3 December 1685 | Willemsen presents second supplication to the Lords of Privy Council. |
| (—) December 1685 | Clerk of Council to write again to London. |

- ¹ W. J. Couper says that the *Campbeltown Declaration* was composed by James Stewart but it is clear from his account that all the major conspirators helped to draft it and that Stewart's role was editorial — Couper, p. 122 (see note 3). See also J. Willcock, *A Scots Earl* (Edinburgh, 1907), for a general account of the Earl of Argyle, and the rebellion.
- ² W. Brown, 'Notes on Argyle's Declaration Printed at Campbeltown, 1685', *Edinburgh Bibliographical Society Publications*, 3(1896-98), 149-51. My paper disputes Brown's dating of the printing of the *Declaration*.
- ³ W. J. Couper, 'The Campbeltown Declaration of 1685', *Records of the Glasgow Bibliographical Society*, 1(1914), 118-24. In note 1, and hereinafter, referred to as Couper.
- ⁴ H. G. Aldis, *A List of Books Printed in Scotland before 1700* . . . , reprinted with additions (Edinburgh, 1970), no 2539. See also Aldis 2538; 2539.3; & 2539.7; D. Wing, *Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales and British America . . . 1641-1700*, second edition (New York, 1972-), A3676.
- ⁵ For example National Library of Scotland 6.692(25) which is an Edinburgh reprint of a London publication, using the title of Argyle's tract. It gives the substance of the *Campbeltown Declaration* and Argyle's short personal declaration in full (pp. 2-3). As these were official government publications the aim of republication was, presumably, to reveal the extent of Argyle's treason (Aldis 2539.3 and Wing A3677).
- ⁶ Sir John Lauder (Lord Fountainhall), *Historical Observes of Memorable Occurrences in Church and State from October 1680 to April 1686*, edited by A. Urquhart and D. Laing, Bannatyne Club (Edinburgh, 1840), p. 178. Hereinafter referred to as Fountainhall.
- ⁷ R. Wodrow, *The History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland*, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1721-22), II, Appendix, p. 155.
- ⁸ Fountainhall, p. 195.
- ⁹ Fountainhall, pp. 178-79. Fountainhall also says: 'He emitted two Proclamations and Declarations, one, a very long declaration of all the grievances the nation has groaned under these 20 years with a specious pretence at religion, now made threadbare by all rebels. The shorter one shows that he is only come to recover his estate unjustly tane from him'.
- ¹⁰ Couper, p. 124.
- ¹¹ There were no genuine miniature presses in the seventeenth century of the kind that became popular in the nineteenth century. There is some evidence, however, that workable scale reductions of the common wooden press were occasionally made. See James Moran, *Printing Presses: History and Development from the Fifteenth Century to Modern Times* (London, 1973), pp. 227-28 and illustration XLIX.
- ¹² I am grateful to H. Westra, Department of Classics, University of Calgary for translating the entries relating to book tradesmen named *Vandervelde* or *Van de Velde* in M. M. Kleerkoper, *De boekhandel te Amsterdam, voornamelijk in de 17e eeuw* ('s-Gravenhage, 1914), the standard study of the Dutch book trade for this period. It seems likely that the Jacob Vandervelda referred to here is the bookseller Jacob vande Velde, whose name was entered in the Amsterdam Booksellers' guildbook 21 October 1675, and who was a bookseller on the corner of Korte Niezel in 1683 and 1684. It is not clear to me whether this is the same man as the Jacobus van de Velde who was buried February 1686, or is the Jacob van de Velde described in 1693 as 'Bookseller on the Zeedijk,' and still in business in 1699. Mr Westra tells me that the variants 'Willemsen', 'Williamson', and 'Willamson' are likely attempts by English scribes at the Dutch name Willemzoon (*Willemse* in Modern Dutch). The scribes also had problems with the printer's first name which

- appears as 'Gilles', 'Gillis', 'Geeills', 'Elias', and
 Unlike van de Velde, there is no reference to G
¹³ *The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1929), 306. Hereinafter referred to
¹⁴ *RPC*, XI, 171.
¹⁵ It is referred to in the entry in *RPC*, XI, 171.
¹⁶ *RPC*, XI, 200.
¹⁷ A province of North Holland.
¹⁸ This is presumably a scribal variant of 'Vander
¹⁹ *RPC*, XI, 427. See also reference on p. 374.
²⁰ *Extracts from the Records of the Burgh of Edin*
 and H. Armet (Edinburgh, 1954), p. 246.
²¹ *RPC*, XII (1930), 114, 162, 176. They were relea
²² See chronology.
²³ *Journal of the Hon. John Erskine of Carnock 16*
 tions of the Scottish History Society, 14 (Edin
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of Events from 1685 to 1750, [edited by Sir G. I
²⁴ Couper, p. 122.
²⁵ Erskine's *Journal*, p. 120.
²⁶ *RPC*, XI, 317. His name was Folcat Offreiz.

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Sufferings of the Church of Scotland, 2 vols p. 155.

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appears as 'Gilles', 'Gillis', 'Geeills', 'Elias', and 'Alice'. I have chosen to use 'Gilles'. Unlike van de Velde, there is no reference to Gilles Willemsen in Kleerkoper.

¹ *The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland*, third series, edited by H. Paton, xi (Edinburgh, 1929), 306. Hereinafter referred to as *RPC*.

² *RPC*, xi, 171.

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⁴ *RPC*, xi, 200.

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⁶ This is presumably a scribal variant of 'Vandervelde'.

⁷ *RPC*, xi, 427. See also reference on p. 374.

⁸ *Extracts from the Records of the Burgh of Edinburgh 1681 to 1689*, edited by M. Wood and H. Armet (Edinburgh, 1954), p. 246.

⁹ *RPC*, xii (1930), 114, 162, 176. They were released 30 March 1686.

¹⁰ See chronology.

¹¹ *Journal of the Hon. John Erskine of Carnock 1683-1687*, edited by W. Macleod, Publications of the Scottish History Society, 14 (Edinburgh, 1893), pp. 118-19; and Hume's 'Narrative' from *A Selection From the Papers of the Earls of Marchmont . . . Illustrative of Events from 1685 to 1750*, [edited by Sir G. H. Rose], 3 vols (London, 1831), iii, 42.

¹² Couper, p. 122.

¹³ Erskine's *Journal*, p. 120.

¹⁴ *RPC*, xi, 317. His name was Folcat Offreiz.