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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

ARGYLL'S LODGING, STIRLING



We continually revise our Statements of Significance, so they may vary in length, format and level of detail. While every effort is made to keep them up to date, they should not be considered a definitive or final assessment of our properties.

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ARGYLL'S LODGING

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1 Summary

1.1 Introduction

Argyll's Lodging is a substantial town house built in several stages from the mid 16th – late 17th centuries. During this time it was owned by a succession of important families and takes its name from the last of these, the Campbells of Argyll. It is located on Upper Castle Hill, Stirling, a short distance downhill from Stirling Castle.

The Lodging comprises three main ranges built around a courtyard (a fourth range to the south was demolished c1860). From the late 17th century it ceased to be a noble residence and was adapted to serve various functions including as a military hospital.

Historic Scotland assumed full responsibility for the buildings in 1996 and following restoration it was opened to the public and presented as a townhouse of 1680s.

1.2 Statement of Significance

Argyll's Lodging is regarded as the best example of an aristocratic town house surviving in Scotland. Its relatively domestic feel means it is easier for many visitors to connect with and understand the workings of a great household here than in some of the great country seats. It is significant on several counts:

- Argyll's Lodging is the best and most complete 17th -century town house surviving in Scotland. The carved and painted decoration that survives is some of the best in Scotland of its period, giving us an unusually complete view of how the house looked to its successive owners.
- The survival of very full inventories adds to our understanding of the furnishing, decoration and use of the house. Specifically, the inventories cast considerable light upon the interests and character of Countess Anna of Argyll.
- Architecturally, the quality and finesse of the earl of Stirling's courtyard design, internally as well as externally, is exceptional and suggests that it was created by architects and craftsmen who were employed on major projects for the crown.
- The lives of the successive owners touch on the affairs of state in a vivid way, making the history of the owners as interesting as the architecture they chose to reside in.
- Within Stirling, the property is closely associated with the Castle and enables another strand of Court life to be interpreted. Architecturally, the juxtaposition with nearby Mar's Wark is also important offering easy comparison between the styles of 16th and 17th century aristocratic townhouses.

The above bullet points encapsulate our current understanding of the main significances of this site. A broader overview of the cultural and natural heritage values of the place is given below.

2. Assessment of Values

2.1 Background

Unified by its coat of pinkish harl, Argyll's lodging is actually a complex structure of at least four main builds. Begun in the mid 1500s, it was extended c.1600 and c.1630, and reached its full extent in the 1670s. In overview (and greatly simplified), the main phases of its development are:

- Circa 1550 A simple rectangular 2-storey house probably constructed for John Traill, a wealthy burgess of St Andrews. This forms the lower portion of the tower house at the NE angle of the site.

- Circa 1600 Adam Erskine acquires the site and is probably responsible for enlarging Traill's house by adding two more storeys and a short wing to the South. This forms the tower house at the NE corner of the site.

- Circa 1630 Sir William Alexander (Viscount and later Earl of Stirling) acquires the site in 1629 and greatly extends the house to form a 3-storey U-plan mansion with a screen wall to west closing it off from the street. This much more formalised and grander setting marked it out as a house of greater rank and status.

- Circa 1670 Archibald Campbell, 9th earl of Argyll acquires the building and further enlarges it by completing the courtyard and adding a range (demolished 1860) to the south. It remained in Campbell hands until the mid 18th century, gradually falling into decline over this time.

From 1800 onwards the Lodging was acquired by the Crown and used in association with the military base at the castle, most notably it served as a military hospital until the mid 20th century. In the 1860s, a large part of the SW range (the work of Archibald Campbell) was demolished.

A fuller account of the history of the Lodging is given at Appendix 1.

2.2 Evidential Values

Argyll's Lodging has high evidential value both for the information contained in its physical fabric and also in the additional documentary evidence relating to the property.

Little work has taken place to establish whether or not the mid-16th century house in the NE corner is actually the first use of the site. Given its location on the main road

into Stirling Castle this seems unlikely. Excavation elsewhere in Stirling indicates that there was a thriving medieval burgh and such a central location is unlikely to have been overlooked, so there is high potential for pre-16th century buried remains. There remains considerable archaeological potential across the site, both for occupation levels and for details of the gardens that will have been laid out by successive owners. The relationship between the main courtyard and the largely demolished SW range is not well understood and archaeological study may shed light upon this.

The interior preserves elements of both 1630s and 1670s work, the latter predominating. Some relatively large areas of original painted decoration survive. In the High Hall the *trompe-l'oeil* arcade is based upon the Corinthian pilasters of the inner face of the gateway, and the frieze upon the existing fireplace. Both these reference points are from the 1630s work. There is also a contract of 1675 with David MacBeath of Edinburgh surviving for the work. This represents an extremely important survival of different types of evidence of all aspects of the conception, design, technicalities and contractual basis for these decorative works.

Further documentary research has potential to add to the evidential and historical values of the site and to increase our understanding of it.

2.3 Historical Values

Argyll's Lodging, in its 17th century guise is primarily associated with two important and interlinked families, the Alexanders and the Campbells of Argyll. Together they serve to illustrate several aspects of 17th century life and politics, including a fair share of drama.

- The Alexander family

The early 17th century work was carried out for **Sir William Alexander** (1567 – 1640). A local laird made good, he became an important figure in the service of the Crown and was created Earl of Stirling in 1633. He was tutor to James VI's first son, and later became joint Secretary of State with Sir Archibald Acheson¹. William's life is full of rich and varied detail, though he died insolvent, leaving the Lodging to be re-possessed by the town and eventually acquired by Campbell (see below) in 1667.

It is possible that William's house was designed by his son, **Anthony Alexander**. Anthony was an architect and held the high office of Kings Master of Works jointly with Sir James Murray of Kilbaberton 1620 – 6 and solely thereafter until 1637. He was therefore at the very forefront of architectural design at the time, with access to the very latest ideas and most able craftsmen (for fuller discussion see Architectural Values, below)

- The Campbells of Argyll

Argyll's Lodging is most associated with **Archibald Campbell, 9th earl** (1629 – 1685) and his second wife **Lady Anna**. Archibald was a supporter of Charles II and a staunch protestant. However, on James II succession he led a rebellion against

¹ . Acheson built a similar U-plan *hotel* in Edinburgh's Cannongate at about the same time. It was similar in general plan, but less decorative in detail.

James' attempt to restore Catholicism. He paid with his life and was executed in 1685.

During the 1680 and 1682 full inventories of the Lodging were prepared. This was to allow Archibald to transfer ownership to **Lady Anna** should he find himself proscribed, as his father had been before him. The inventories provide an accurate insight into the furnishings and possessions of the family and form the basis of the current presentation of the property. They offer particular insight into how Lady Anna lived within the Lodging. For instance, she is known to have used the tiny closet off the drawing room as a place where she kept her Cambridge Bible (carefully edited to remove those sections proscribed by Parliament).

The Campbells of Argyll were feudal superiors to the Alexander's original estates in Stirlingshire. In addition William Alexander had accompanied the 7th Earl on his travels in Europe.

- Other historical associations

In 1746 the **Duke of Cumberland** stayed at Argyll's Lodging while in pursuit of Prince Charles Edward Stuart en route for Culloden.

Military Hospital: The great expansion of the British Army following declaration of war with France in 1793 brought with it a need for more accommodation and facilities. Barrack provision at Stirling Castle was extended and its medical provision transferred to the Lodging, which had been acquired around 1800 for the purpose. The larger rooms were used as wards, with smaller rooms used as surgeries and dispensaries. After the army ceased to use Stirling Castle, in 1964, the Lodging was used as a youth hostel until it was taken over by Historic Scotland and opened to the public in 1996.

2.4 Architectural and Artistic Values

Architecturally, the most significant phases of work at the Lodging are the works of the 1630s and the 1670s. The key aspects are the **completeness** and **extent of survival**, coupled with the very high quality of the design and execution of both interior and exterior.

While it is easy to narrate the development of the Lodging in broad outline (as at 2.1 above) the overlaps between the two 17th century phases are more complex than might be expected. The ties between the two families were strong, and Argyll's alterations and additions seem concerned to compliment and acknowledge his predecessor's work. A similar relationship is played out internally, where e.g. the Campbell painted decoration in the High hall (the main public chamber) takes its lead from the architectural motifs of the 1630s work (see 2.2. above). A fuller account of the architectural development of the Lodging is given at Appendix 1.

As a building type, Argyll's Lodging is best described as an *hôtel*; an urban form of courtyard house separated from the street by a screen wall and deriving from French models. This form was set in the 1630s work and it relates to other urban examples such as Acheson House, Edinburgh. In less urban surroundings, freed from the need

for the screen wall, other comparators are found in U-plan villas such as Kilbaberton (Edinburgh) or Pitreavie (Fife).

It also shares decorative motifs with this group and other architecturally innovative buildings such as Heriot's Hospital (Edinburgh) and Winton House (East Lothian), e.g. the buckle quoins and the juxtaposition of strapwork pediments with pilastered dormers.

While the designer of the 1630 phase is not known with certainty, it is plausible that any one of several Masters of Works or Master Mason's to the Crown could have been involved (see also 2.3. above): James Murray, Anthony Alexander, William Wallace or John Mylne jun are all possibilities. The conclusion from this is that Sir William Alexander's *hôtel* was a very fashionable and sophisticated building designed to attract attention and advertise status within the context of the Court.

The later 17th century work is less flamboyant but equally high quality. It is best seen in the north and south wings where e.g. plainer pediments contrast with the livelier strapwork of the 1630 phase. Probably the strongest statement of Argyll's ambitions for the Lodging is the massive rusticated gateway – the public face of the lodging. This takes as its model an engraving from Alessandro Francini's *New Book On Architecture* (1631, Paris) first published in English in 1669.

2.5 Landscape and Aesthetic Values

Externally, Argyll's Lodging is a delight on the eye. The detail of the sculptural decoration, particularly around the central courtyard, is captivating and the overall impact most impressive.

Internally, the richness of the rooms, graded in quality and splendour from the simpler, more public, laigh hall, to the sumptuously decorated family rooms on the first floor, is an invaluable architectural illustration of the social hierarchies of the time. The survival of high-quality 17th-century architectural features (most notably the fireplaces) and painted decoration (particularly in the high dining room but also on the ground floor) add immeasurably to the patina of age that lends the building much of its appeal.

The courtyard, screened from the bustling street, has a feeling of calm and seclusion; a buffer zone between the outer world and the noble seclusion within. The once very impressive, and important, aesthetic of a formal garden to the rear of the property is now utterly lost, due to the proximity of modern development to the east and the introduction of a car park adjacent to the building itself.

Regarding setting, Argyll's Lodging sits somewhat compressed upon Castle Wynd, making it difficult to appreciate in its entirety. This may well have been the original intention, for the screen wall, relatively austere apart from its splendid entrance arch, seems to have enabled viewers to get only tantalising glimpses of the architectural grandeur that lay behind. By contrast, the views from the rear of the property, looking east towards the Firth of Forth, remain inspiring, despite modern accretions, much as they were intended to be in the 17th century.

2.6 Natural Heritage Values

Not yet assessed

2.7 Contemporary/Use Values

Public Access by guided tour is operated in conjunction with Stirling Castle and significant numbers of visitors choose to visit Argyles Lodging as part of a visit to the Castle. Guided tours emphasise the roles of Lord Stirling and the earl of Argyll in creating the present building. Also of importance to visitors is the building's use as a military hospital and youth hostel; individuals connected with both uses still come to visit their former 'stamping-ground'.

Most visitors come to Argyll's Lodging knowing very little about the architecture of the house, or the history of its aristocratic occupants, though some come who have Army connections or recall its days as a youth hostel. The tours provide comprehensive understanding of the historical figures associated with the town house.

2.8 Major Gaps in Understanding

- What occupied the site prior to the mid 16th century?
- What was the exact relationship between the Alexander and Campbell families and why did Archibald Campbell take the 1630s work so much into account ?
- What was the full extent of the property in the 17th century, particularly with regard to the garden layout in the time of the 9th earl of Argyll?
- Can documentary research e.g. in Campbell of Argyll archives for instance shed more light on the use, development and history of the site.
- How was the property used by the family after the death of Countess Anna of Argyll?
- What Army hospital records survive to help shed light on this aspect of the property's history?

2.9 Selected Bibliography

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2.10 Associated Properties

(other related sites locally) - **Stirling Castle; Mar's Wark**

(other residences associated with Lord Stirling) – Menstrie Castle

(other residences of the earls of Argyll) – **Castle Campbell**; Inveraray Castle

(some other late-medieval noble town houses in Scotland) – **Croft-an-Righ House, Edinburgh**; Glencairn Greit House, Dumbarton; Kelly Lodging, Pittenween; Maybole Castle; Moray House & Tweeddale House, both Edinburgh; Provost Skene's House, Aberdeen.

2.11 Keywords

town house, courtyard, apartment, painted decoration, fireplace, Campbell, Argyll, Alexander, Army, military hospital, youth hostel.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Timeline

1300s - the Campbell lords of Argyll own various tenements in Stirling. By the later 1500s this includes the corner plot to the south of Argyll's Lodging, where Broad Street meets Castle Wynd.

1559 - John Traill, burgess of St Andrews, owner (builder also perhaps) of the modest two-storey house at the core of the present Argyll's Lodging, sells his property to Adam Erskine, commendator (lay administrator) of **Cambuskenneth Abbey**, and kinsman of the Erskine earls of Mar, hereditary keepers of **Stirling Castle**.

1604 - Adam Erskine passes the property on to a member of his wife's family, the Erskines of Craig.

1629 - Janet Erskine's husband, Sir William Alexander (later Lord Stirling), acquires the property. Sir William, a native of Stirling, travelled as a young man through France and Italy with 'his lord superior the [7th] earl of Argyll', and it was probably Argyll who introduced him at court. In 1602 he was appointed tutor to James VI's first son, Prince Henry. A gifted poet, the strongly royalist Sir William also endeavoured to found a Scottish colony in North America (Nova Scotia), and in 1626 became Secretary of State for Scotland.

1630 - Sir William is created Viscount Stirling. On acquiring the property, he expands it from an L-planned tower house into a luxurious U-shaped villa, probably in anticipation of Charles I's coronation visit in 1633. In that same year he is created earl of Stirling and Viscount Canada. The architect may be his son, Anthony, appointed joint royal master of works in 1629, and knighted in 1635.

1640 - Earl William dies insolvent and leaves his mansion to his fifth son, Charles. However, it is soon mortgaged to the Town Council who foreclose the loan and take possession of the house. A proposal to turn the mansion into an almshouse comes to nothing and it lies abandoned.

1660s - the Town Council sell the property to Archibald Campbell, 9th earl of Argyll, whose main seat is Inveraray Castle, on Loch Fyne. The family's secondary residence in Lowland Scotland, **Castle Campbell**, having been badly damaged during the Cromwellian Commonwealth, the 9th earl sees Earl William's town house as a suitable replacement. He and his second wife, Anna Mackenzie of Balcarres, initially co-own the mansion, now known as Argyll's Lodging, together with its garden, and another large house and various smaller properties in the neighbourhood, conveyed to them in 1671, by an arrangement with the marchioness of Argyll.

1674 - Argyll settles the Lodging and the other properties more formally upon Countess Anna as her jointure house. On 1 June 1680, in light of the earl's impending fall from grace, he makes over to her the entire 'plendishing, furniture,

and movables within the house'. Two inventories are drawn up, one in 1680 and the other in 1682. They itemise furniture in great detail and give an unusual degree of information of the workings of the household, including the number and disposition of rooms allotted to each of the children.

1685 - The 9th earl is executed in Edinburgh following his abortive rising against James VII.

1707 - Robert Sibbald, Charles II's former physician, in his *History*, describes Argyll's Lodging as a 'fine house, of a newer architecture and contrivance [to **Mars Lodging**], with several apartments and gardens'.

1740 - John, 2nd duke of Argyll, notes in a letter to his cousin that the Lodging is in a decayed state and that he is worried about its effect on neighbouring properties. Demolition is contemplated to create a terrace fronting **Mars Wark**.

1746 - William, duke of Cumberland, resides in the Lodging, whilst in pursuit of Prince Charles Edward Stuart, the Young Pretender.

1764 - the 4th duke of Argyll sells the property. It then passes through several hands, including McGregor of Balhaldie.

c.1800 - the Crown acquires the property for conversion into a military hospital, serving the garrison in **Stirling Castle**.

c.1860 - much of the SW range is demolished.

1964 - **Stirling Castle** ceases to be a military depot and the military hospital is closed. The Ministry of Public Building and Works (Historic Scotland's predecessor body) assumes responsibility for Argyll's Lodging, which becomes a youth hostel.

1994 - following the youth hostel's closure, Historic Scotland assumes full responsibility for Argyll's Lodging. It carries out archaeological investigations, and undertakes detailed documentary research prior to recreating the principal rooms as they may have looked in the early 1680s. Part of the property becomes Historic Scotland's Central Region HQ.

Appendix 2

Architectural Description

Argyll Lodging is a quadrangular residence of composite construction, built largely in the 17th century as the residence of a leading nobleman. Three ranges define the E, N and S sides of a courtyard, with a screen wall on the W. The earliest part of the house is at its NE corner, and was probably originally a 2-storeyed house with a hall on the first floor and a kitchen on the ground floor. This was later extended to form an L-shaped tower-house. Most of what is now seen, however, dates from extensions of the 1630s and 1670s by Viscount (later the Earl of) Stirling and the Earl of Argyll, respectively. In its most complete state there were three main ranges, with the entrance and principal rooms in the E range, facing the gateway through the screen wall on the W side of the courtyard. A fourth range originally extended S from the W end of the S range, but only part of its street facade now remains. After

some years in use as as a military hospital, the house passed into state care along with the castle.

The building comprises significant elements from all four periods. Much of what remains, however, dates from Lord Stirling's and the earl of Argyll's extensions of c.1630 and c.1670. In its most complete state, the lodging consisted of three main ranges around a central courtyard, and a fourth range extending southward along the street frontage; only part of this south range now remains. The chief highlights are the principal apartments on the first floor - the high dining room, drawing room, lady's closet and bedchamber – which have recently been recreated by Historic Scotland to display them as they may have looked in the early 1680s

Phasing

Argyll's Lodging is a complex building that appears surprisingly coherent. There are four identifiable building phases.

The earliest upstanding elements survive at the NE corner of the ensemble. They formed part of what is believed to have been John Traill's mid 16th-century town house - a two-storey rectangular building. What remains includes two barrel-vaulted cellars on the ground floor with the front entrance through the south wall. The north cellar, with its large fireplace, was probably the kitchen.

The second phase, most likely contributed by Adam Erskine towards the end of the 16th century, saw the property enlarged. The two-storey house was heightened to become a four-storey tower house, a short wing was added to the SE corner, and a one- or two-storey wing added to the west; this last contained an extended kitchen space at ground level. In the re-entrant angle of the L-plan structure was a circular staircase contained in a turreted tower.

The third phase belongs to Sir William Alexander c.1630 and may well have been designed by his second son, Anthony, who 'by his learning and travellis abroad . . . acquired skill in architectorie'. (Other possibilities include William Ayton and John Myln, both of whom were closely involved with Cowane's Hospital, Stirling, in the same decade, and Heriot's Hospital, Edinburgh, a building with close affinities to Argyll's Lodging.) The result was the conversion of the L-plan tower house into an elegant U-plan villa, then beginning to come into vogue in Scotland. (Another, plainer U-plan villa at Pitreavie (Fife), built for Sir Henry Wardlaw, may also be by Sir Anthony Alexander, who married Wardlaw's daughter, Elizabeth, in 1633.) The short wing of the L-plan tower house was extended southward and heightened to three storeys to create an homogeneous roof-line externally and house internally a new suite of principal rooms. At its southern end a further short range returned to the west to balance the main body of the earlier house. The central courtyard thus created was closed off from the street to the west by a screen wall.

The fourth, and final, phase, contributed by the 7th earl of Argyll in the 1670s, saw the north wing (the original 16th-century building) heightened, and the south wing extended westward to meet the courtyard's screen wall. The new south wing was further extended south along the street frontage (since demolished).

Courtyard

The courtyard shows evidence both of Lord Stirling's creation and changes made to it by the earl of Argyll. The most obvious 'Stirling' features are the buckle-shaped quoins, dating to the 1630s (seen also in the 'woman house' at **Rowallan Castle**), and the windows, particularly the dormers with their elaborate strapwork gablets. The most obvious 'Argyll' feature is the splendid Tuscan-inspired outer gate from the street. However, all is not what it seems, for Argyll re-arranged much of Stirling's elaborate (and dated) decorative stonework. The main entrance porch into the east range, for example, bears Lord Stirling's arms and the date 1632, but there is good reason for believing that it was moved here from elsewhere in the complex c.1670, for the porch partly obscures the surround of the doorway. Another anomaly concerns the window pediments on the first floor of the north wing which bear the date of Lord Stirling and his lady even though they must date from Argyll's time. Likewise, the doorway at the base of the stair turret at the outer end of the south wing, dated 1674, has traces also of the date 1633. By way of explanation, it is possible that Argyll was recording his own contribution along one side of the courtyard but also that of his predecessor along the other.

At the end of the south and north ranges, the earl of Argyll added blocks. These have gable walls that neatly pair off, thus presenting a unified west façade to either side of the screen wall. Each also has a turret staircase, topped with conical roofs, extending into the internal courtyard space. The north range extension housed a large kitchen area in its ground floor.

The western screen wall dates from two periods. The internal gateway arch is flanked by rather spindly fluted Corinthian pilasters that appear to be of c.1630. The outer archway, on the other hand, has Tuscan pilasters, and both arch and pilasters have heavy chamfered rustication, a design based on an engraving of Alessandro Francini, published in English in 1669. Robert Mylne, for example, used Francini as a model for his monument to John Mylne in Greyfriars' Churchyard, Edinburgh (1674), and also at Thirlestane Castle, Lauder (1670-9).

SW wing

Only the west wall survives of this wing. It includes a modest classical doorway and two windows. The range was presumably of at least two storeys, as a circular stair formerly existed along its east side.

Interior

The house is entered through a porch at the centre of the east range. The laigh (lower) hall, the outermost reception room also used as a dining hall for the senior household servants, has one of three original fireplaces surviving from Alexander's time, set into the south wall. The main stair, at the NE corner, is a timber scale-and-platt with heavy turned balisters and square newels. This gave access to the principal public rooms on the first floor. Elsewhere in the house are five 'back' stairs. A door to the right of the main stair opened onto the formal gardens to the rear (east) of the house.

The first floor of the east range housed the principal state room - the high dining room, entered off the main stair through an imposing doorway with a lugged architrave and capped by a pediment bearing the painted coroneted initials of the 9th earl. The room has original painted decoration surviving on its north wall – *trompe-*

l'oeil Corinthian pilasters extending from a timber dado up to a modillion course immediately below the ceiling; the other walls display recreated paintwork of 1996, on lining paper that protects the few surviving original fragments behind. The original decoration was painted by David McBeath, of Edinburgh, in 1675; the whole scheme was based on the stone pilasters on the courtyard's west screen wall. The fireplace in the south wall is a legacy from the 1630s.

Beyond (south) the high dining room was the drawing room, the first room of the earl and countess of Argyll's apartment. Here too the fireplace (in the east wall) is of the 1630s; its lintel, carried on figures with human heads, console-like bodies and lions' paws, bears the arms of Lord and Lady Stirling. Another original feature, a doorway (now blocked) to the right of the fireplace, provided access to a timber balcony overlooking the formal gardens.

The other rooms in the earl and countess's apartment comprised a small chamber entered directly off the drawing room – described as 'my lady's closet' in the 1682 inventory – and the principal bedchamber, reached either from the drawing room or the circular stair in the the SE corner of the U-plan. The ghosting of a window arch in the west wall of the bedchamber confirms that the south range originally ended there, whilst a blocked door to the right of its plain fireplace gave access to other family rooms, including the one next in the sequence which has preserved early 18th-century wainscoting.

The laigh hall, high dining room, drawing room, closet, bedchamber and kitchen have been recreated by Historic Scotland, based on the furniture and furnishings listed in the two inventories (1680 and 1682).