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Scotland and the Exiled Stuarts

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Bonnie Prince Charlie Entering the Ballroom at Holyroodhouse before 30 Apr 1892. Royal Collection Trust/ ©Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2018



The Stuart dynasty in England had a close, if troubled, relationship with Scotland, their 'ancient kingdom', where their dynasty had ruled since 1371 before assuming the crowns of England and Ireland in 1603. James VI and I of England had a genuine love-hate relationship with a country which had chased his mother off the throne and where he had been intimidated and threatened many times as a boy. Charles I thought he understood the country in which he was born and whose accent he seems to have retained, but which proved his downfall by virtue of defeating him in two religious wars, then offering massive military support to the English Parliamentary army from 1643-46. Charles II reimposed Episcopacy in the pursuit of a Royalist Scotland, and ended the forced political union with England under Cromwell. Charles controlled the country, but was widely hated in it.

In many respects, James II and VII's relationship to Scotland was the most interesting. His interrupted sojourn in Edinburgh as Duke of Albany and York in 1679-82 was intended to get him out of England during the Exclusion Crisis.⁽¹⁾ It was, however, far more than an exile of convenience, as James threw himself into the affairs of Scotland after entering it as Duke of Albany and York and heir to the throne on 21 November 1679. During his time at Holyrood and as King he would oversee the development of the Advocates' Library, the Royal College of Physicians, printing, and a number of other innovations. James also instituted the offices of Historiographer-Royal (1681) and Geographer-Royal for Scotland (1682), which remain live to the present day, and also promoted Scottish games such as curling (bringing in Irish players) and golf. His understanding of the need to extend the burgh arguably underpinned the later development of the New Town, which was enabled

by James's Charter to Edinburgh of 25 September 1688. He authorized Scottish colonies in South Carolina (1682) and East New Jersey (1685) and supported a multi-kingdom polity in England, Scotland and Ireland with internal free trade.

In exile, this remained the political vision of both James and his son. Although James pursued war to regain his throne principally in Ireland because of the huge military resources to be found there, he was personally affected by the unconditional support granted him by John Graham, Viscount Dundee, Lieutenant-General of his Scottish army in 1688-89. Despite the defeats the Jacobite forces in Scotland suffered after Dundee's death in the moment of victory at Killiecrankie, James proposed to use them again in May 1692, when he ordered Major-General Thomas Buchan, then in exile in France, to depart from Le Havre or Dunkirk (Buchan was in fact at Dunkirk, so military coordination was not the Court's strong point), 'with such Scots officers and soldiers as are at present with him' preparatory to sailing for Dunottar or Slains Castle on the east coast, accompanied by orders for William Keith, Lord Keith, to garrison Dunottar and John Hay, Earl of Erroll, Slains, in preparation for the landing that never came.

Commissions were given to Alexander Cannon (General Officer Commanding in Scotland in the last phase of the Jacobite war in 1690-91) as Major-General, and to Keith as Colonel of Horse, while French troops and English, Scottish and Irish officers in the French service were being prepared for a Scottish landing. Letters were also sent to the Duke of Queensberry and the Scots Privy Council, 'but, the expedition of La Hogue failing, all the letters were cancelled and most of the commissions'. A large number of officers required subsistence from the

King as a result: a list dating from December 1692 is in the Stuart Papers^[2].

Despite these disappointments, one garrison still held out for the Stuarts in Scotland at the Bass Rock, a small steep island of 3 hectares 2km off the east coast of Scotland at North Berwick. King James was solicitous for their welfare, recalling Lieutenant-Colonel Grahame from the Bass to France 'for his health', while sending provisions to its governor, Michael Middleton, on 21 August 1693. In March 1694, James found resources to send a military advisor and a Catholic priest over, at a cost of at least 250 livres, to the Stuart Court to support the struggling garrison militarily and morally^[3]. Notwithstanding this, the Bass surrendered in June following an English blockade, the last place in the British Isles to be held by the Jacobites after the flight of James II and VII. Henceforward, James's focus switched to England, although he and his son continued to issue occasional commissions to Scots, for example that to Patrick Grahame, who had been a colonel in the Scots forces at Dunkirk in 1692, to be colonel of a (non-existent) dragoon regiment in Scotland on 19 May 1703^[4].

Despite this, however, Scotland played a relatively minor role in the politics and outlook of the Jacobite court prior to 1706-07 and the Acts of Union passed by both the Scottish and English Parliaments, which ended Scotland's existence as an independent state. The Union massively increased the reservoir of support the Stuarts could enjoy in the northern kingdom. In 1708, 1715, 1719 and 1745, Jacobite plans were not always solely focused on Scotland, but Scotland was the only place they could expect major armed support. Only the king in exile would restore Scotland's place as an independent state under the Stuart Crown, and this

seems to have been emphasized by increased use by the Stuarts of their Scottish regnal number in official documents relating to Scotland, particularly in times of crisis. James 'VIII' expressed the politics of this new phase of the Jacobite struggle in his declaration 'to his good people of his Ancient Kingdom of SCOTLAND', on 18 February/1 March 1708 from Saint-Germain, calling for 'our Ancient Kingdom' to be 'restored to its former honour, Liberty, and Independency, of which it has been so treacherously deprived'. What follows is a narrative of Scottish patriotic grievance:

'What they suffer'd under the Tyranny of Cromwell, as also the usage they met with in the affaire of Darien, and the Massacre of Glenco under the Usurpation of the Prince of Orange, and the present Union or rather Subjection...'^[5]

There was a ready audience for these politics, which were backed up by ceremonial titles and orders which retained the idea of a Scottish Parliament and kingdom. In 1716, Alexander MacDonald of Glengarry was made 'a lord and peer of Parliament of Scotland', a title which could not be enjoyed relating to an institution which no longer existed, but the mention of which indicated crown support for ending the Union^[6]. James was 'resolved to wear on our own person' the Order of the Thistle, and a signet Seal for Scotland was most particularly ordered by John Erskine, Earl (Jacobite Duke) of Mar from Norbert Roettier^[7]. Others made greater sacrifices. In 1715, up to 22 000 Scotsmen, something like two-thirds of the total fencible strength of the country, joined the Jacobite army under Mar, a vacillating if profoundly intellectual politician whose military abilities were exposed by the division of his army and his failure to overwhelm the British forces at Sheriffmuir. Some of Mar's commissions (such as that awarded to John Gordon of Glenbuchat, 22 October/2

November) and army accounts are to be found in the Stuart Papers^[6].

James landed in Scotland when his cause was already in decline. Plans to crown him on the Moot Hill at Scone (the ancient seat of Scottish kingship, where Charles II had been crowned in 1650) had to be abandoned, and Mar and others persuaded him, though it was 'much contrair to the King's inclination', to order the burning of the towns of Crieff, Auchterarder, Blackford and later Muthill to deny them to the enemy^[9]. In the event not all the towns identified seem to have been burnt, but James was guilty enough to write to the British commander John Campbell, Duke of Argyll, in a letter endorsed 'adieu to the Scotch', 'to apply a certain sum for making good the losses of the inhabitants of the burnt villages'^[10]. The King and Mar (now a Jacobite Duke) then fled to the continent, and in their letter of submission to Argyll of 15/26 February 1716, General Alexander Gordon of Auchintoul and his senior officers wrote to Argyll as their fellow Scot - in terms more redolent of a patriotic than dynastic rising - that 'the many and great hardships we groaned under since the late union were not the least motives of making us take arms'^[11]. There was criticism of the need to retreat at such a pace (although the Jacobites could barely hold the east coast ports and did not have a secure base in Inverness): and a 'Copy of his Majesty's reasons for abandoning Perth' was composed^[12]. Self-exculpatory accounts of events were common in the event of (equally common) Jacobite failure: William Mackenzie, Earl (Jacobite Marquess) of Seaforth, submitted a lengthy account of his conduct in 1715^[13].

Following the Rising, there was a large increase in the number of Scottish Jacobite officers in exile and unable to gain employment. Naturally they turned to the Court

for support. On 21 October/1 November 1716 and again on 20 November/1 December, Colonel Arthur Elphinstone, Master of Balmerino, wrote from Blois for help as he was not on the subsistence list and 'otherwise...must make shift to live on what he can get from Scotland'^[14]. Others gave detailed accounts of their services: Alexander Robertson of Struan/Strowan, who fought in every rising, wrote a Memorial to Mar in 1717, noting that 'in January 1689, when a boy of 17 at the University of St Andrews, he hindered the Prince of Orange's declaration being read', and claiming to have led the last 'clan that took the field', after the defeat at Cromdale in May 1690, as well as leading a battalion in 1715 against, 'a government I have been these 30 years snarling at'^[15]. There was something of an exiled Scottish colony at Bordeaux, whence Lieutenant-Colonel Alexander Leslie (on the subsistence list, but only at the level of Major, which involved a lower subsidy) wrote requesting 'something ordered by the King for his relief, he being afflicted with a wicked ague accompanied with frequent fits of gravel for two months'. The resulting medical bills 'have brought him into debt', and one-off medical expenses seem to have been a recurring problem among Scots exiles: Alexander Forbes, Lord Forbes of Pitsligo, noting to Mar on 26 October 1717 that Dr Patrick Abercromby's 'sickness has been expensive to him'^[16].

The Stuart Papers also reflect the deep-seated connections between Scottish Jacobite culture and the Scottish artistic diaspora in Europe. This is particularly evident in Mar's correspondence. He was a considerable improver and deeply interested in gardening and design: 'I am infected with the disease of building and gardening', he wrote to John Law on 14/25 April 1717: Mar described his ideal home as having 'a

dry rising ground with a prospect^[17]. Mar patronized painters, architects and musicians (he described himself as a 'brother of the brush'), and was close friends with James Gibbs, to whom he wrote on 16 April 1716 sympathizing with Gibbs' loss (because of his suspected Jacobitism) of his role as a Commissioner for the New Churches, saying that Gibbs' 'fair daughter in the Strand' (St Mary le Strand) would be a lasting memorial to him - as it has been^[18]. Gibbs was in his turn confiding: 'I live the...single life, only a little loose sometimes', the Aberdonian Catholic architect confessed to Mar^[19]. Robertson of Struan, who was a considerable poet, corresponded with Mar to tease him into interpreting his poetry, and Mar himself seems to have exchanged some poetry with Struan^[20]. On 21 June/2 July 1718 the Scottish painter John Alexander wrote to Mar from Rome regarding some commissions he had arranged or painted for him. In the same letter Alexander expresses what was to become a commonplace of Scottish Jacobite code, the use of 'Mary Stuart, that great queen' and 'esteem for her glorious memory', as a signifier of loyalty to her later Stuart successors. This large artistic network of Scots abroad was not an idle one: John Alexander passed intelligence directly to Mar concerning the 'English fleet' at Naples in summer 1718 as a new Rising was in prospect^[21].

Scotland, of course, featured once more in a major way in Stuart plans in the 1744 invasion attempt and 1745 Rising. Charles landed with almost no men and weapons after the attack of HMS Lyon damaged the Elisabeth on 9 July; only the faster Du Teillay stayed out of the range of the British guns, making landfall at Eriskay two weeks later^[22]. Despite his success from late July in building a rising, the long march to England

ended in retreat, but the seizure of the high ground at Falkirk^[23] secured a further victory in central Scotland before the defeat of Culloden, where after an exhausting night march some of the Jacobite soldiers were cut down where they slept, while their battle formation was in confusion when hostilities started just after 13.00^[24]. As with many Jacobite episodes dating back half a century, defeat was viewed as the result of betrayal^[25] and the *saue qui peut* order sent by Charles to his troops at Ruthven effectively ended the rising as a military venture^[26], though isolated units held out in the localities for some years. In exile, Charles wept for his 'Highlanders' (the army was in fact drawn from right across Scotland north of the Borders, Ayrshire and Galloway), but although it took some time for the protagonists on either side to realize it, the role of Scotland - and indeed anywhere - in the politics of a Stuart restoration was drawing to its close.

NOTES

^[1] This was an attempt between 1679 and 1681 by certain elements of Parliament to pass bills to prevent the Roman Catholic James from succeeding his Protestant brother, Charles II, to the throne.

^[2] HMC *Stuart*, i. 72-76; RA SP/M/18/43.

^[3] HMC *Stuart*, i. 78, 85; RA SP/M/18/51.

^[4] HMC *Stuart*, i. 74-5, 183; RA SP/M/19/69.

^[5] HMC *Stuart*, i. 218; RA SP/Main/2/47.

^[6] HMC *Stuart*, iii. 303; RA SP/M/20/41.

^[7] HMC *Stuart*, ii. 72, 74; RA SP/M/20/3-6.

^[8] HMC *Stuart*, i. 450, 472; RA SP/Main/5/73, 110.

^[9] Mar to Lieutenant-General Alexander Gordon of Auchintoul, 24 January/4 February and 4/15 February 1716. HMC *Stuart*, i. 496, 505.

^[10] James to Argyll, Montrose, 4/15 February 1716. HMC *Stuart*, i. 505-7; RA SP/Main/6/24.

^[11] HMC *Stuart*, i. 512-13.

^[12] HMC *Stuart*, iv. 13-15; RA SP/Main/6/15.

^[13] The Marquess of Seaforth to the Duke of Mar, 13 Nov 1717. HMC *Stuart*, v. 195-204; RA SP/Main/24/44.

^[14] HMC *Stuart*, iii. 164, 272; RA SP/Main/13/133.

^[15] HMC *Stuart*, iii. 512-13; RA SP/Main/17/83 and HMC *Stuart*, vii. 5; RA SP/Main/33/23.

^[16] HMC *Stuart*, v. 159; RA SP/Main/23/138.

^[17] HMC *Stuart*, iv. 210-11; RA SP/Main/19/8.

^[18] HMC *Stuart*, ii. 92; RA SP/Main/7/50.

^[19] HMC *Stuart*, iv. 568; RA SP/Main/21/127.

^[20] HMC *Stuart*, v. 189; RA SP/Main/24/36.

^[21] HMC *Stuart*, vii. 4-5; RA SP/Main/33/19 and HMC *Stuart*, vii. 117; RA SP/Main/34/89.

^[22] RA SP/M/10; also William Nangle to James Edgar, 11 Aug 1745, RA SP/Main/267/5.

^[23] Mr Aeneas MacDonald, 31 July - Sept 16 1750, RA SP/Main/310/139.

^[24] Peter Andrew O'Heguerty's (anonymous) 'Life of Prince Charles Edward', 1745-1746. RA SP/M/11/265, 271, 276.

^[25] Charles Edward Stuart, 10 June 1750. RA SP/Main/307/173.

^[26] Charles Edward Stuart to The Chiefs of the Clans, 28 April 1746. RA SP/Main/273/117.

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