

## THE BATTLE OF PRESTONPANS

believing in the causes of their fellow men and fellow Scots.  
Long may this continue.

### Notes

- 1 The English spelling 'Stewart' rather than the French 'Stuart' has been adopted throughout
- 2 Although James VI was the first James to become king of England, he was the sixth Scottish king of that name. Therefore, in this account, he and those who followed him are given their Scottish title and designated 'King of the Scots'
- 3 Monaldi & Sorti, *Imprimatur*, Mondadori, Italy 2002
- 4 J. Follian, *Sunday Times*, September 23 2001
- 5 Murray GH Pittock, *Myths of the Jacobite Clans*, p.100
- 6 *ibid.*, p. 88
- 7 *ibid.*, p. 96
- 8 Archives of the Ministry of Defence
- 9 V. Vitteleschi, *A Court in Exile*
- 10 Grant R. Francis, *Romance of the White Rose*
- 11 V. Vitteleschi, *A Court in Exile*
- 12 P. MacNeill, *Prestonpans and Vicinity: Historical, Ecclesiastical and Traditional*, 1884, p. 210
- 13 Jacobite website
- 14 Baron Porcelli, *The White Cockade*
- 15 *The Scotsman*, 13th May 1950
- 16 Murray GH Pittock, *Myths of the Jacobite Clans*
- 17 *ibid.*, p. 88
- 18 *ibid.*, p. 88
- 19 P. MacNeill, *Prestonpans and Vicinity: Historical, Ecclesiastical and Traditional*, 1884, pp. 217–18
- 20 *ibid.*, p. 103

# THE BATTLE OF PRESTONPANS

## ANNEX 1

### Adam Skirving's Celebration Song

This song, written about the Jacobite victory at Prestonpans, was composed by Adam Skirving (1719–1783), a farmer living near the battlefield, circa 1746

The Chevalier, being void of fear, did march up Birsle brae, man,  
And through Tranent ere he did stent, as fast as he could gae, man;  
While General Cope did taunt and mock, wi' mony a loud huzza, man,  
But ere next morn proclaim'd the cock, we heard anither craw, man.

The brave Lochiel, as I heard tell, led Camerons on in clouds, man;  
The morning fair, and clear the air, they loos'd with devilish thuds, man  
Down guns they threw, and swords they drew, and soon did chase  
them aff, man  
On Seaton crafts they buft their chafts, and gart them rin like daft,  
man.

The bluff dragoons swore, blood and oons, they'd make the rebels  
run, man:  
And yet they flee when them they see, and winna fire a gun, man.  
They turn'd their back, the foot they break, such terror seiz'd them  
a', man.  
Some wet their cheeks, some fyl'd their breeks, and some for fear did  
fa', man.

The volunteers prick'd up their ears, and vow gin they were crouse,  
man!  
But when the bairns saw't turn to earn'st, there werena worth a  
louse, man  
Maist feck gade hame, O fie for shame, they'd better staid awa, man,  
Than wi' cockade to make parade, and do nae gude at a', man.

Menteith the great, when hersel shit, un'wares did ding him owre, man,  
Yet wadna stand to bear a hand, but aff fu fast did scour, man.  
O'er Sourtra Hill, ere he stood still, before he tasted meat, man.  
Troth, he may brag of his swift nag, that bore him aff sae fleet, man.

And Simpson, keen to clear the een of rebels far in wrang, man.  
Did never strive wi' pistols five, but gallop'd wi' the thrang man.  
He turn'd his back, and in a crack was cleanly out o' sight, man.  
And thought it best: it was nae jest, wi' Highlanders to fight, man.

## THE BATTLE OF PRESTONPANS

'Mangst a' the gang, nane bade the bang but twa, and ane was ta'en,  
man;

For Campbell rade, but Myrie staid, and sair he paid the kane, man.  
Four skelpe he got, was waur than shot, frae the sharp-edg'd  
claymore, man;

Frae mony a spout came running out his reeking het red gore, man.

But Gard'ner brave did still behave like to a hero bright, man;  
His courage true, like him were few that still despised flight, man.  
For king, and laws, and country's cause, in honour's bed he lay, man.  
His life, but not his courage fled, while he had breath to draw, man.

And Major Bowle, that worthy soul, was brought down to the  
ground, man;

His horse being shot, it was his lot for to get mony a wound, man.  
Lieutenant Smith of Irish birth, frae whom he call'd for aid, man.  
But full of dread, lap o'er his head, and wadna be gainsaid, man.

He made sic haste, sae spurr'd his beast, 'twas little there he saw, man;  
To Berwick rade, and falsely said rhe Scots were rebels a', man.  
But let that end, for weel 'tis kend his use and wonts to lie, man.  
The Teague is naught, he never fought when he had room to flee,  
man.

And Cadell, drest, among the rest, with gun and gude claymore, man,  
On gelding gray he rode that day, with pistols set before, man.

The cause was good, he'd spend his blood before that he would  
yield, man;

But the night before he left the core, and never fac'd the field, man.

But gallant Roger, like a soger, stood and bravely fought, man;  
I'm wae to tell, at last he fell, and mae down wi' him brought, man  
At point of death, wi' his last breath, some standing round in ring, man,  
On's back lying flat, he wav'd his hat, and cried, 'God save the king!'  
man.

Some Highland rogues, like hungry dogs, neglecting to pursue, man  
About they fac'd, and, in great haste, upon the booty flew, man  
And they, as gain for all their pain, are deck's wi' spoils of war, man;  
Fu'bauld can tell how her nain sel was ne're sae praw before, man.

At the thorn tree, which you may see, bewest the meadow mill, man,  
There mony slain lay on the plain, the clans pursuing still, man.  
Sic unco hacks, and deadly whacks, I never saw the like, man;  
Lost hands and heads cost them their deads, that fell near Preston  
dyke, man.

## THE BATTLE OF PRESTONPANS

That afternoon, what a' was done, I gade to see the fray, man;  
But I had wist what after past, I'd better staid away, man:  
On Seaton sands, wi' nimble hands, they pick'd my pockets bare,  
man;  
But I wish ne'er to dree sic fear, For a' the sum and mair, man.

Michael Brander. *Scottish and Border Battles and Ballads*.  
(New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1993), 273–276.

### ANNEX 2

## The Thorn Tree at Prestonpans

*The Thorn Tree*, by Hugh Hannah, *East Lothian Antiquarian  
and Field Naturalist Society, Transactions Vol. 2*, pp.154–7

As the white hawthorn tree is dead, which for about a century and a half was a living landmark of the battle of Prestonpans (September 21st, 1745) and those who may remember it in its glory of white and fragrant “flourish”, or scarlet haw, are few in number, the editors have pleasure in complying with a suggestion that there should be published in the *Transactions* one or two pictures of it. The tree was one of the famous historic trees of the county. Though never so wide spreading or imposing as the great yew tree at Whittingehame under which it is reputed the murder of Darnley was plotted in 1567, it was in its prime a handsome hawthorn.

The tree stood where the battle raged fiercest, and where the brave “Christian Hero”, Colonel James Gardiner of Bankton, fell. It had originally three stems, standing out so markedly one from another that Peter McNeill in his *Tranent and its Surroundings* (2nd edition), 1884, speaks of the tree as a clump of three thorn trees; and J. Sands in his *Sketches of Tranent in the Olden Time*, 1881, writes that “strictly speaking there were three thorn trees”. Like Bonnie Prince Charlie fighting to secure the crown of his ancestors the tree was young in years when the battle was fought. The hawthorn seldom lives to be two hundred years old, and the thorn tree was complete till 18th October 1899, though buttressed with iron rods and bands. On that date the largest stem was blown down as mentioned in a *Courier* of June 1990. In 1817 it was already regarded as venerable. In a letter written in that year it was so described by Andrew Bigelow of Medford, Massachusetts, and that letter is incorporated in his *Leaves*

## THE BATTLE OF PRESTONPANS



*Thorn Tree – Original Tree*

*Reproduced from Chalk Drawing in flat water colour in possession of Mr James McNeill. Artist, Mr. F. W. Mason*

*from a Journal or Sketches of Rambles in North Britain and Ireland* published in 1824. Bigelow and a friend had walked over a part of the battlefield when a shower overtook them. They found shelter from the rain “under the lee side of a hawthorn row, about a stone’s cast from the venerable thorn tree beside the meadow mill”. Bigelow goes on to say “Our covert being on the declivity of a rising ground which commanded a view of the scene of combat we were enabled to calculate the relative advantages and disadvantages of the positions occupied by the two armies anterior to the engagement.” Close to the tree in a field known as Thorntree Field many of the slain were buried. Both Jacobites and Royalists peacefully sleep their last sleep together under the ground that was stained with their life blood at the time of the battle with a deeper scarlet than that of the reddening haws on the thorn tree. Towards the close of the eighteenth century, as chronicled by Peter McNeill, “when this field was being drained the workmen came upon a number of bodies, the clothes covering the remains being so well preserved they could distinguish Royalist from rebel.”

The Society has made two visits to the battlefields of Prestonpans (or Preston), and an account of both is given on pp.