

# The Battle of Prestonpans 1745



by Stuart  
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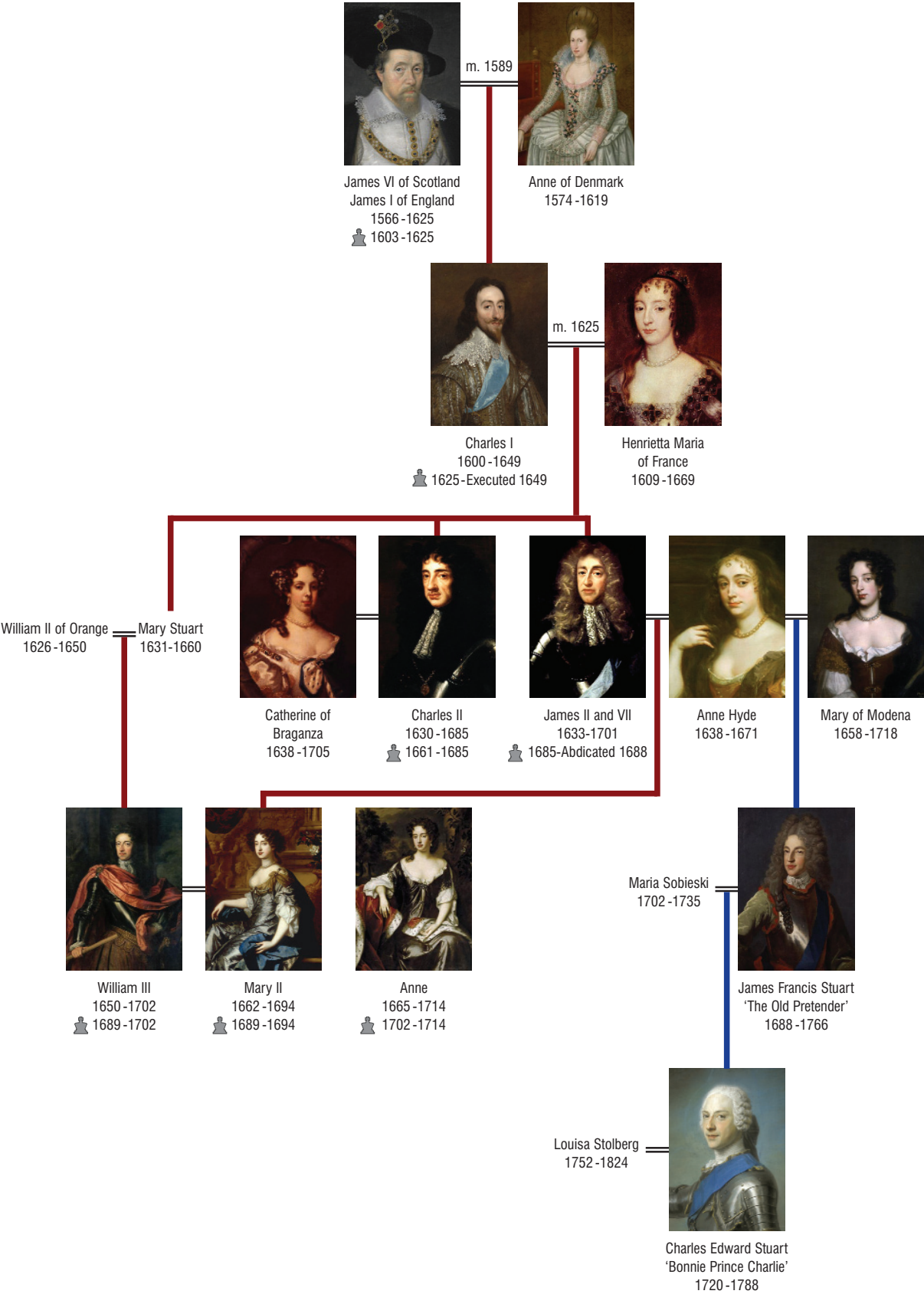
# WHAT LED UP TO THE BATTLE OF PRESTONPANS

## TIMELINE

- 1293** Earliest existing record of a Scottish Parliament
- 1297** English army defeated at Battle of Stirling Bridge by William Wallace
- 1314** Edward II defeated at Battle of Bannockburn by Robert the Bruce
- 1320** Declaration of Arbroath - confirmation of Scotland's status as an independent country.
- 1603** James VI of Scotland becomes James I of England
- 1625** Charles I succeeds James VI and I
- 1649** Charles I is beheaded
- 1650** Cromwell wins the battle of Dunbar
- 1651-1660** Cromwell's New Model Army occupies Scotland
- 1660** Restoration of monarchy with Charles II
- 1685** James VII and II becomes king
- 1688** James forced from the throne
- 1689** William and Mary proclaimed king and queen
- 1698** Ships of the Company of Scotland set sail for Darien
- 1702** Death of King William and accession of Queen Anne
- 1707** Act of Union ratified by Scottish Parliament creates United Kingdom of Great Britain
- 1714** George I succeeds Queen Anne
- 1715** First Jacobite rising, led by James Stuart, the father of Bonnie Prince Charlie.
- 1745** Second Jacobite rising, led by Bonnie Prince Charlie
  - 21 September – the Battle of Prestonpans**
  - 5 December – Jacobites decide to turn back at Derby**
- 1746** **17 January – the Battle of Falkirk**
- 16 April – the Battle of Culloden**
- 20 September – Bonnie Prince Charlie escapes**
- 1750** Highland Clearances begin



STUART FAMILY TREE





On Saturday 20th September 1745 there were two armies close to each other in East Lothian. One of them was a British Army under the leadership of General Sir John Cope and the other was led by Prince Charles Edward Stuart, known ever since as Bonnie Prince Charlie.

Prince Charlie had landed on the west of Scotland two months earlier to try to raise an army to take back the throne of Britain for his father, James. Charlie's Catholic grandfather, James the second of Great Britain (and seventh of Scotland), had been forced from his throne in 1688. Many people disagreed with his religious policies and his belief that kings and queens had absolute power over their subjects' lives. He was the last Catholic monarch to reign over England, Ireland and Scotland.

He was replaced by James' daughter Mary and the Protestant William of Orange, a Dutch Prince she had married. When he died he was succeeded on the throne by his wife's sister who became Queen Anne. Because she did not have any heirs the next King of Britain was George the Elector (Prince) of Hanover in Germany, who was chosen by the Parliament in London. Queen Anne was the last Stuart monarch.

Ever since 1688 there had been people, calling themselves Jacobites, who had been trying to bring back the male line of Stuart Kings. There had been a couple of earlier risings in the 1700s and many people in Scotland saw themselves as Jacobites, supporters of James Stuart, from the Latin for his name Jacobus. Partly this was because of their religion – the Catholics and Episcopalians of the time supported the Stuarts - but also because of resentment of the Union with England.

In 1707 the Treaty of Union between Scotland and England had been passed by the Scottish Parliament against the will of the majority of the Scottish people who remembered the age-old struggles against English attempts to conquer Scotland. The two Parliaments were united into one, sitting in London. Scotland and England were now the United Kingdom of Great Britain, leaving many people in both the Highlands and the Lowlands angry and alienated.

So when Bonnie Prince Charlie landed and raised his standard at Glenfinnan (put up his flag to bring people in to join his army) there was already support for him in many parts of Scotland. Not everybody supported the Jacobite cause, though, and in places like Glasgow most people supported the Government while in the capital, Edinburgh, support was mixed.

In England there was some support for the Jacobite cause but not to the same extent as there was in Scotland. That support was mainly in areas where there were a lot of Catholics, like the North West.

Prince Charlie, who was born and raised on the Continent, had come to Scotland with the support of the French Government, which was at war with the British at the time. They wanted to make the British government take troops away from the fighting on the Continent to make it easier for them to win the war. However the French always promised more than they gave to the Jacobites.



## THE BATTLE OF PRESTONPANS 1745

Having landed on the west of Scotland, the first people Charlie wanted to attract to his cause were the Highland clans. These were really tribes of warrior people who had a long history of raiding each other to steal cattle, so most of the men were trained to use weapons, even if they could not always afford to own muskets and swords.

What every Highlander did have was his dirk, a three sided, razor-sharp 25cm long knife which was both a weapon and a tool. Because they were so warlike, the Highland clans had always been seen as troublesome by governments in both Edinburgh and London and many people in the rest of Britain were terrified of them, thinking they were nothing but bloodthirsty savages. The fact that most of the Highlanders only spoke Gaelic just made things more difficult.

The first people to come to join Charlie were men from various clans, though not as many as he had hoped. Some of the clans were on the government side and others did not want to take sides at all. In some cases families had members on both sides.



Bonnie Prince Charlie managed to gather an army together in the Highlands and marched south, avoiding the army that General Cope had marched north to try and stop the rebellion. By the 20th September General Cope had been as far as Inverness and Aberdeen, from where he had brought his army down to Dunbar by ship. His plan was to try to regain Edinburgh, which Prince Charlie and his men had taken over.

While the Prince and his followers were in Edinburgh they were joined by more men coming from the Highlands and elsewhere to join the Jacobites. Some of the young men of Edinburgh also joined up with Prince Charlie's army.

*The movements of the two armies before the Battle of Prestonpans.*

# BONNIE PRINCE CHARLIE AND GENERAL COPE



*Far left:  
A well-known portrait of  
Bonnie Prince Charlie.*

*Left:  
A cartoon of General Cope  
drawn just after the battle.*



The two men leading the armies could hardly be more different. Lieutenant-General Sir John Cope was a 54-year old career soldier, as his father had been before him. A small man, who was always smartly dressed, he cared a great deal about the details of anything he was involved in, and some people thought him fussy. He had been a successful soldier and his bravery in previous battles had resulted in him being rewarded with a knighthood.

He had also served as a Member of Parliament before becoming the commander-in-chief of the government forces in Scotland in 1744. He was an experienced and capable soldier who was absolutely loyal to the Hanoverian cause.

In 1745 Charles Edward Stuart was 25 years old and had been raised to think of himself as a future King of Britain, even though he had never set foot in Britain.

His early life was spent at various royal courts on the Continent and he grew up to be a handsome young man, six foot tall and with all of the education and social skills that came with being a prince. He spoke several languages and he had shown that he was no coward when he took part in the Spanish and French siege of the town of Gaeta in Italy at the age of just 14. However, he was headstrong and sometimes found it hard to accept advice from others. But he was charming and attractive and there is no doubt that he was a celebrity in his own time and inspired great loyalty in his followers, especially in Scotland.

The Hanoverians called him the Young Pretender, his father being the Old Pretender, because they said, they were pretending to be the rightful rulers of Great Britain. Charlie and his father had different ideas!



# THE BRITISH ARMY



**MUSKET** Also used by the Jacobite army.



**BAYONET** Knife shaped attachment that fits on top of the musket.

While there was no formal training for army officers in the eighteenth century most of them had paid to become officers and wanted to be as professional as they could be. Because of the high price of buying a commission in the army most of the officers came from the better off classes and the regiments were usually named after their commanding officer.

Cope's regular army soldiers came from all over the British Isles and, unlike the professional soldiers of today, many of these ordinary soldiers were forced into the army through the Press Acts, government laws that allowed men to be brought into the army whether they liked it or not. Others had been sent into the army by the courts. This meant that the British Army always had a problem with common soldiers deserting. Many of them had not had a lot of training, though all were provided with uniforms and weapons.

The type of fighting that they were trained for was common all over Europe. Great bodies of men would march onto the battlefield in ranks to face their enemy then would fire their muskets, which were of a type known as the 'Brown Bess'. They were not trained marksmen - the point was to fire lots of musket balls at once at the enemy to try and cause as much harm as possible. Then they would fit their bayonets to their muskets and advance at a steady walk towards the enemy and fight them hand to hand.

They were also used to having the support of artillery, big cannons and smaller mortars to soften up the enemy, as well as dragoons. These were cavalry troops, men mounted on well-trained horses who could be sent quickly to any part of a battlefield where they were needed. The dragoons had carbines, short muskets and sabres, long curved swords. Sometimes they also had pistols.

At the Battle of Prestonpans, the British Army had some artillery, six light field cannons and six mortars. However, General Cope had been forced to find gunners for the cannon wherever he could and only had half a dozen naval gunners from the warships who had brought his army down from Aberdeen to Dunbar and four retired soldiers. The night before the battle he sent to Edinburgh Castle for some experienced gunners but they didn't manage to get past the Jacobite army to join him.

Cope had two regiments of cavalry, the 13th Dragoons led by Colonel Gardiner and 14th Dragoons under the command of Lieutenant Archibald Hamilton. He also had four regiments of infantry, or foot, as they were known then. As at this time most British Army regiments were known by the name of their Colonel, their commanding officer, the four regiments at Prestonpans were called Guise's, Lee's, Murray's and Lascelles'.

As well as these troops Cope had two regiments of Highland troops who had been formed by the government to police the Highlands and to try to stop inter-clan cattle raiding. In all the British Army at Prestonpans consisted of about 2,500 men. In Scotland they were generally known as Redcoats because most regiments had red uniforms.



# THE JACOBITE ARMY



## POWDER HORN

*Used for carrying and pouring gunpowder.*

**CLAYMORE or  
BASKET-HILTED  
BROADSWORD**

**DIRK or  
DAGGER**

**PISTOL or  
HANDGUN**

## TARGE or SHIELD

*Sometimes with a spike attached in the centre.*





When Bonnie Prince Charlie landed on Scotland's west coast he had hoped that most of the Highland clans would join him. This didn't happen. Some of the clans remained loyal to the Hanoverian government while others were just not sure that he had a good enough chance of winning.

Simply because he had landed in the west, nearly all of the people who came to join him at first were from the Highland clans. The Camerons, led by their chief Donald Cameron of Lochiel, were the first and most important clansmen to join the prince. They numbered around 700 men.

The Jacobites on the East Coast in Aberdeenshire, Angus and Moray did not join up until later, many of them after the Battle of Prestonpans. However on his march down into central Scotland Charlie picked up the Atholl Brigade, clansmen from central Perthshire, led by Lord George Murray who was soon to become one of the main military leaders of the Jacobites.

Many of the Highland men came from different branches of the Clan Donald, the biggest of all the clans. In total around 900 joined the prince, including men from the MacDonalds of Clanranald, the MacDonalds of Glencoe, the MacDonnells of Glengarry and the MacDonnells of Keppoch. Other clans who joined were the Robertsons, the Grants of Genmoriston, the McLachlan clan, the Stewarts of Appin and a group of MacGregors.



Most of their leaders were given the military title of Colonel even though many of them did not have any real experience of the pitched battles that armies of the time usually fought. In all there were probably around 2,500 officers and men in the Jacobite army.

They had no artillery and the only cavalry they had were 36 horsemen, known as the Perthshire Horse, led by William Drummond, the Viscount Strathallan.

Because most of the Jacobites at Prestonpans were from the Highland clans, their officers were also their relatives. Some of them, like many of the British Army troops, did not particularly want to be there, but had been forced to come along, usually by their chief. The soldiers from the Lowland areas were all volunteers.

While many of the Jacobites had muskets like the British soldiers, not all of them did. They had dirks, swords and targes (shields) and some had pistols.

Some of them, because of the lack of proper weapons, were armed with improvised weapons made by fixing the metre-long curved blade of a scythe - a tool normally used to cut down crops - to a long pole. This made a truly fearsome and deadly weapon, a bit like the traditional Lochaber axes of the Highlanders. These axes had a big hook on the top, which was used to pull horsemen from the backs of their horses.

The British army soldiers and their officers were used to moving on and off the battlefield slowly and steadily, and everything was done to orders from the officers. It was a different story among the clansmen - once battle started the Highlanders always relied upon speed. For centuries the clan warriors had used the Highland charge to great effect and on the day at Prestonpans it worked excellently.

Once they started running, the Highlanders would always fire any weapons they had, then drop them and run at the enemy with sword and targe. In their right hand they held a sword while the left arm passed through the hoops on the back of the targe and the left hand held a dirk. Once they were close enough to the enemy's bayonets, they would bend their left knee and take the thrust of the bayonet on the targe. Then lifting their left arm they pulled the soldier's musket up high leaving them open to a stab or slash with the sword.

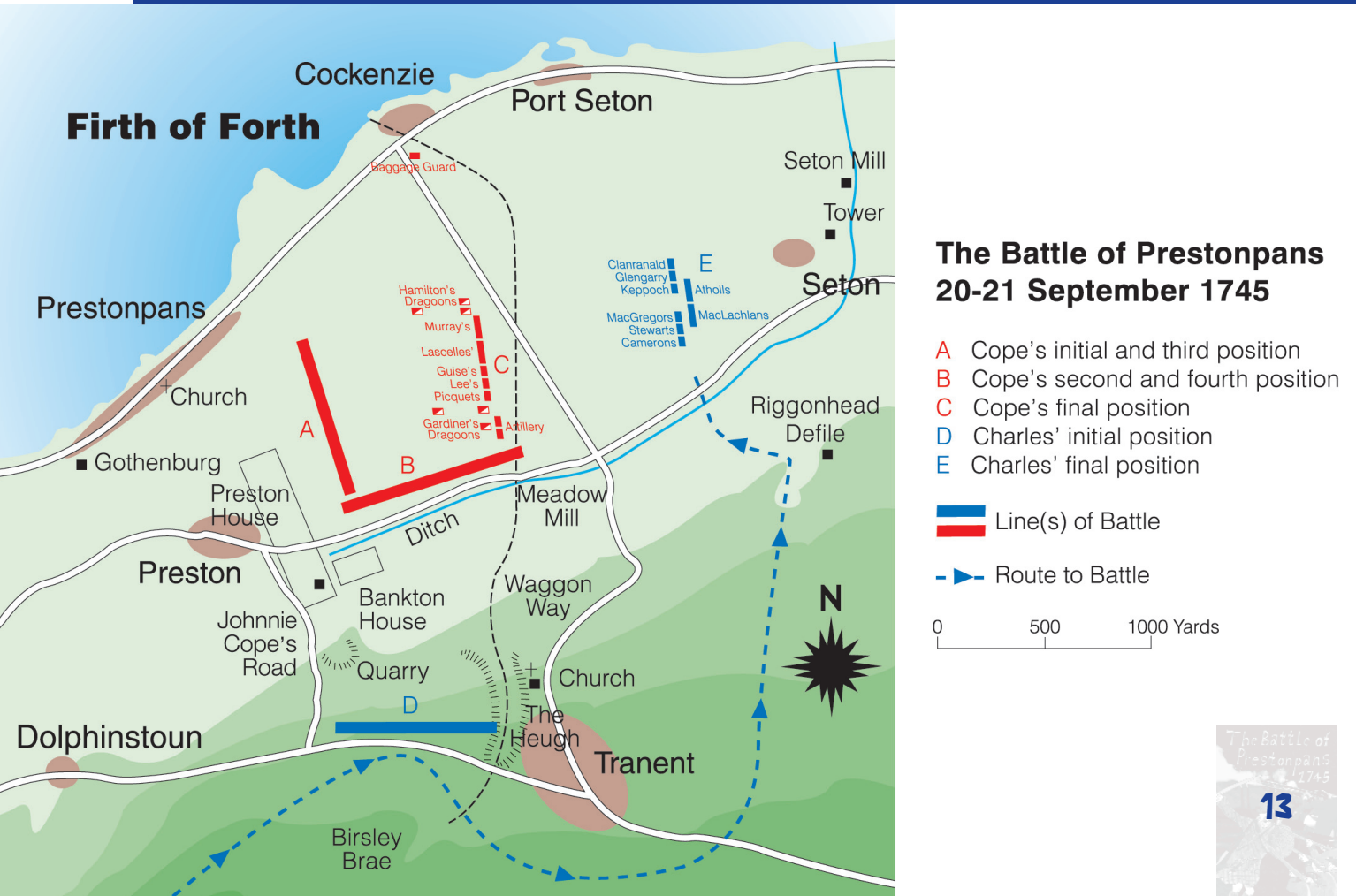
This often killed the soldier and as he fell the Highlander would move into any further lines of the enemy slashing left and right with dirk and sword, often bringing down two men at a time. The usual tactic in the Highlands was to get above the enemy and charge down upon them but at Prestonpans the ground was flat. The Highlanders charged anyway.



Another difference was that although all armies of the time would loot (steal) all sorts of goods from their enemies after a battle, the Highlanders were used to going into battle in order to get booty –money, jewellery, weapons – in fact anything that was worth something and could be carried off.

To them it wasn't theft at all – for hundreds of years they had been involved in raiding between clans when the main aim was to take the other side's cattle. It was in fact considered an honourable thing for a Highland gentleman to do – and all the clansmen thought of themselves as Highland gentlemen, even the poorest ones.

# THE DAY BEFORE THE BATTLE



At nine o'clock in the morning of Saturday 20th September Cope and his army left Haddington. They planned to march to Musselburgh from where they hoped they could attack Edinburgh and take it back from the Jacobites.

The Jacobites had scouts out watching them and Lord George Murray, who was now a general in the Jacobite army, thought that they would go through Tranent and then over Falside Hill. However Cope had been listening to local people and realised that even if going over Falside Hill would give him the advantage of the high ground, it was very rough and not at all suitable for either cavalry or artillery. He therefore turned his troops north near Elvingston, then west to march along the smoother ground nearer the coast.



A scouting party of high-ranking officers went ahead of the main body of the army to look for suitable camping sites near Musselburgh. As they approached the Honest Toun they saw something through their telescopes that shocked them. Heading towards them from the west was a small troop of Jacobite cavalry. Close behind them was the entire Jacobite army.

When they had heard that Cope and his men had landed at Dunbar, the Jacobites had moved to Duddingston to the south of Edinburgh. Here Prince Charlie and his leading officers had discussed their next move and all had agreed the best plan was to march out and meet General Cope head on. There had been a bit of an argument about who would have the position at the right of the battle line when the fighting started. This was considered a great honour and three different clans put forward their own claims. These were the Camerons under their chief Lochiel, the MacDonalds, the biggest of all the clans, and the men of Atholl who were led by Lord George Murray himself.

The one sure thing about any Highlander was that he was very proud and arguments over who would take the most honourable place in battle had in the past seen some clans leave the battlefield in a huff! It was finally decided that the Camerons would have the right one day, and the MacDonalds the next. The Jacobites clearly expected the battle to go on for a while.



On Saturday morning the Jacobite army left Duddingston and, before they did, Prince Charlie went out before the assembled troops and drew his sword, shouting so all could hear, "Gentlemen I have thrown away the scabbard." The scabbard was the sheath attached to the belt that swords were carried in, and he was dramatically saying to the men that he was ready for battle! The men responded with a great cheer and the army set off. The Camerons had been given the right of honour that day and led the way. They crossed the river Esk and went past Pinkie House when the scouts met them to say that Cope's men were near Tranent about six kilometres away.

Hearing how close the enemy were Lord George Murray was anxious to give the Highland troops the advantage of being above the enemy. Being so sure that he had little time before

Cope's men got to the high ground, Murray immediately led the Camerons up Falside Hill without even sending word to the rest of the army. Here he stopped to let the rest of the Jacobites catch up. What he saw once they were up on the hill surprised him. There below him, on level ground between Tranent and Prestonpans, was the British army lined up facing him.

When he had heard that the Jacobites were approaching from the west, Cope had drawn up his troops in a series of fields which made up an area about a kilometre and a half square just on the



*Marching out from Duddingston.*

south of Prestonpans. He had chosen his ground well. Convinced that his artillery and cavalry would give him victory over the untrained Highland troops, he had his men lined up facing to the west, towards Edinburgh. The field had only just been harvested the day before and there was only a solitary thorn tree in it. Hopefully, this meant he would have a clear field of fire for his artillery.

To the north was the Firth of Forth where ships from the Royal Navy could come in with supplies for the army if they were needed. Directly to the west there were two great houses both surrounded by ten foot high park walls with just two narrow passages running between them. One was Preston House – where Preston Lodge School stands today. The other was Bankton House, the home of one of Cope's officers, Colonel James Gardiner.

He had been a wild man in his youth but had taken to religion and become a devout Christian. He was not too popular with his men, however, as he was a great believer in severe physical punishment when they did anything wrong.

To the south of the field running to Tranent and the foot of Falside Hill was an area known as the Tranent Meadows. This was a large area of marshy ground drained by ditches that were two and a half metres wide and over a metre deep. This would be very difficult ground to try and attack through. The field was pretty safe on three sides. Cope was sure he had a very strong position indeed.



When Cope saw that the Jacobites had gone up Falside Hill he turned his men so that they faced them, to the south. The two armies could see each other plainly. To Cope it looked like he was very well placed as the enemy would have to come at him over the marshy ground of Tranent Meadows. Crossing this ground would slow them down and make them easy targets for the cannon and muskets of the British Army soldiers.

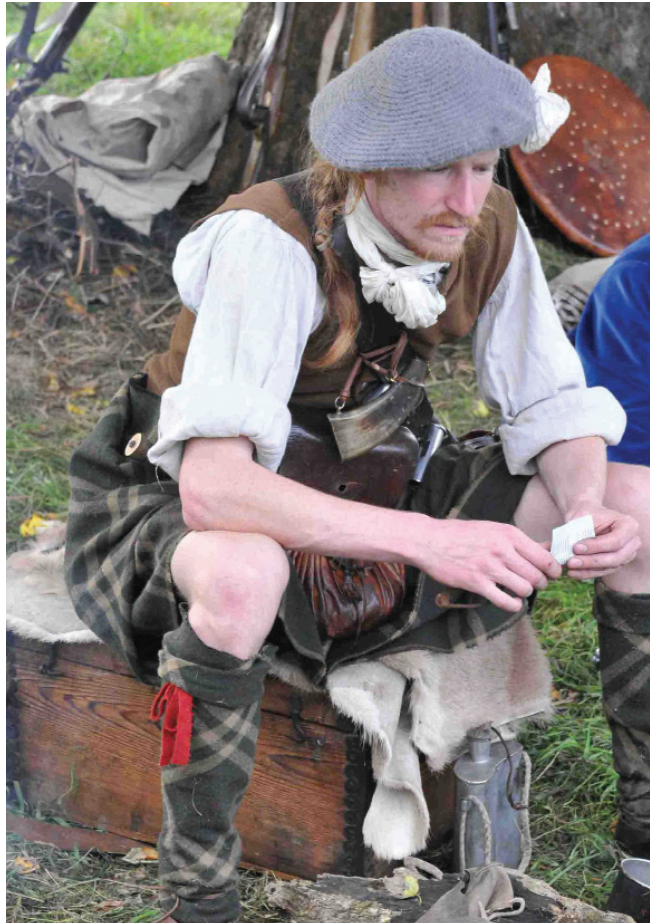
Up on Falside Hill the leaders of the Jacobites were unhappy. Lord George Murray realised that holding the high ground gave him no advantage at all. If he tried to get his men to cross Tranent Meadows they would not be able to keep together and even crossing the ditches would be very hard.

Another problem that the Jacobites had was that because some of the leaders did not like each other, they did not always tell each other what they were doing. Lord George Murray did not even get on that well with Prince Charlie and was easily upset if he did not get things his own way. Colonel John O'Sullivan, an Irishman who had come with Prince Charlie from France, was also someone who liked to do things his own way and in the afternoon of the Saturday he sent 50 Camerons into the churchyard at Tranent - without telling any of the other officers what he was doing. This got them much closer to the British troops.

Once they were settled in the Kirk yard the Camerons saw a small scouting party from the British side coming close. Immediately they started firing their muskets at them. All this did

was draw attention to themselves. The scouting party rode off without suffering any casualties and the Camerons soon found themselves being fired at by a British cannon. A few of them of them were wounded. Murray then sent orders for them to retreat from the kirkyard, without telling O'Sullivan.

The two armies spent the night close enough to hear each other talking. Most of the Highlanders were well used to sleeping outside and the uniforms of the British soldiers were designed to be warm, but many of them spent an uncomfortable night. Of course many of them would have been unable to sleep because of the excitement or fear of the battle that was to take place the following day.



At around 9pm the leaders of the Jacobites got together to discuss what they should do the next day. It was obvious that trying to attack the British Army from the south meant crossing the bogs and ditches of Tranent Meadows. This was hardly a good plan. They needed to figure out something else. Although the Jacobites were always squabbling among themselves, this time they all agreed that there was only one thing to do. They would have to move their army to attack the British from the east. This was pretty dangerous as they would have to march a long way east before turning and by then the sun would have come up and the British would have them as easy targets for a long time.

One of the supporters of the Jacobite army was Robert Anderson of Whitburgh. His father owned the Meadows and he had often hunted there and knew a way across the marshes. Robert was a shy young man and didn't want to seem pushy by interrupting senior officers. After most of the officers had gone to sleep he told his friend James Hepburn of Keith about the shortcut who told him to waken Murray straight away and tell him. Anderson went and found Murray sleeping on the ground in a freshly cut field of peas. He woke him up and told him of the path. Murray immediately realised that using the shortcut would solve all their problems.

Another meeting was held and the new plan of action agreed. In the dead of night the army was awakened, everyone being told to keep as quiet as they could. The MacDonalds came up past the Camerons to take the front of the line and at around 4 o'clock in the morning the whole army began to move out silently. The little troop of cavalry held back since the horses could alert the British sentries. Most of the Highlanders were cheerful and eager to fight.



On the British side, General Cope was up most of the night. He had strung a line of sentries in front of his armies and had three large fires lit so that the sentries could see better. He was also sending out regular small patrols of dragoons to find out if the Jacobites were up to anything. None of these knew of the path down which Robert Anderson was leading the Jacobite Army.

Cope then heard reports of various movements among the Jacobites and roused all his men by having a cannon fired. He realised that the Jacobite army had moved and was going to attack from the east so lined up his army facing that way along a line about seven hundred metres long. His cannon and mortars were at the side nearest the Meadows, just beside the ditch, with one squadron of Dragoons, behind them and a body of infantry, about 100 men, on their right.

During the early hours of the morning the Jacobites began to move up. They walked three abreast along the path shown to them by Robert Anderson. Prince Charlie was close to the front of the line. They had marched in complete silence for almost a kilometre before turning north along Anderson's path. Riggonhead Farm lay 1.75 kilometres along this path. Here they wheeled to their left so they were heading north west. Day was just beginning to dawn at this point but the visibility was bad and the two columns couldn't see each other or the British army.



Struggling to see, the second column under the Duke of Perth actually marched too far north, and lined up facing the enemy. The regiments with Murray stopped sooner, leaving a gap in the line. This meant that the Jacobite frontline looked longer than the British one. Another column under Prince Charlie was behind the frontline as a reserve. When the British Army officers and men saw this they thought that the Jacobite Army was larger than it actually was. Cope himself thought this must mean that there were over 5,000 Jacobites ranged against him.



*Re-enacting the night-time Riggonhead Defile march.*

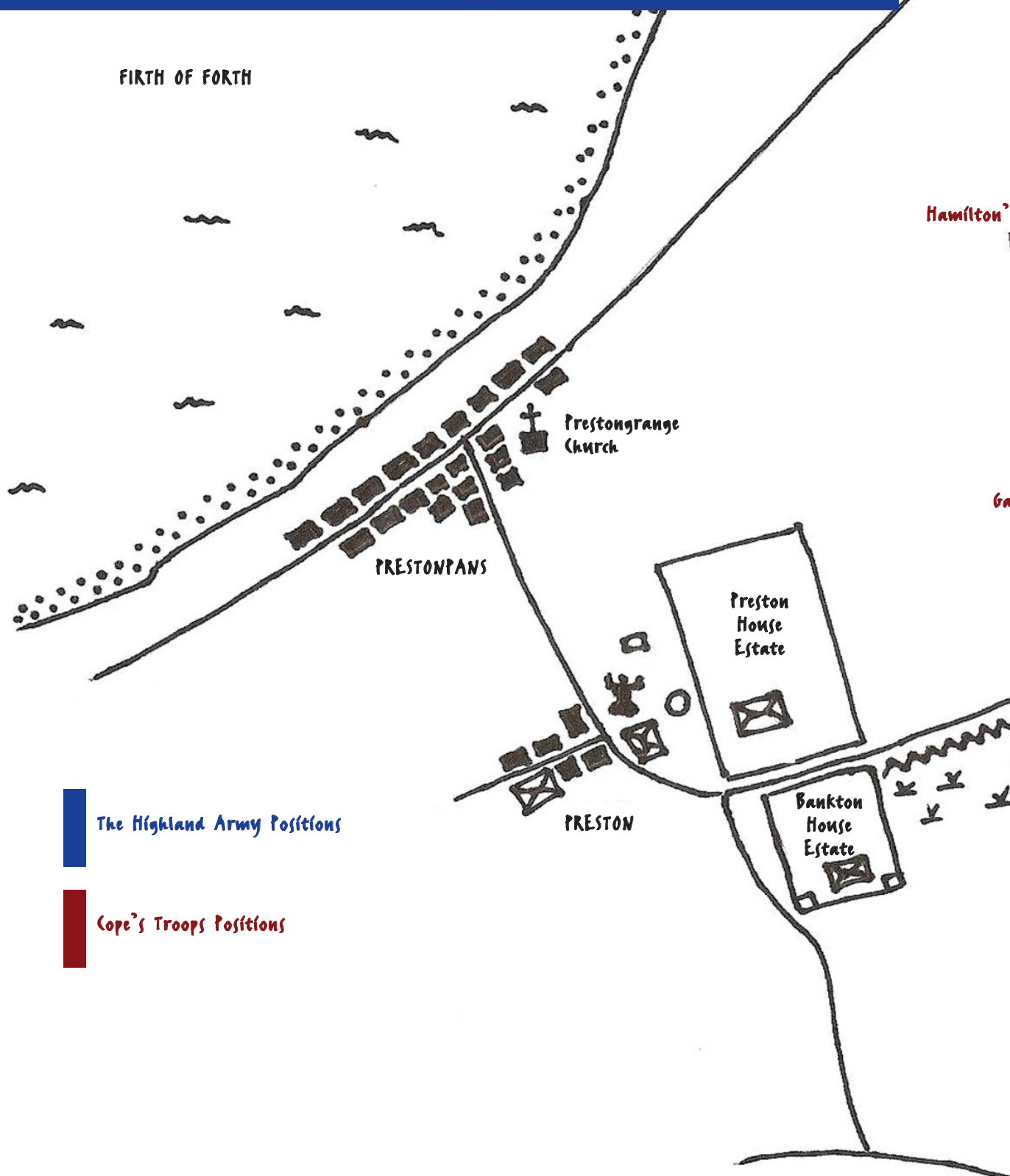
# THE BATTLE OF PRESTONPANS

20th-21st SEPTEMBER 1745

FIRTH OF FORTH

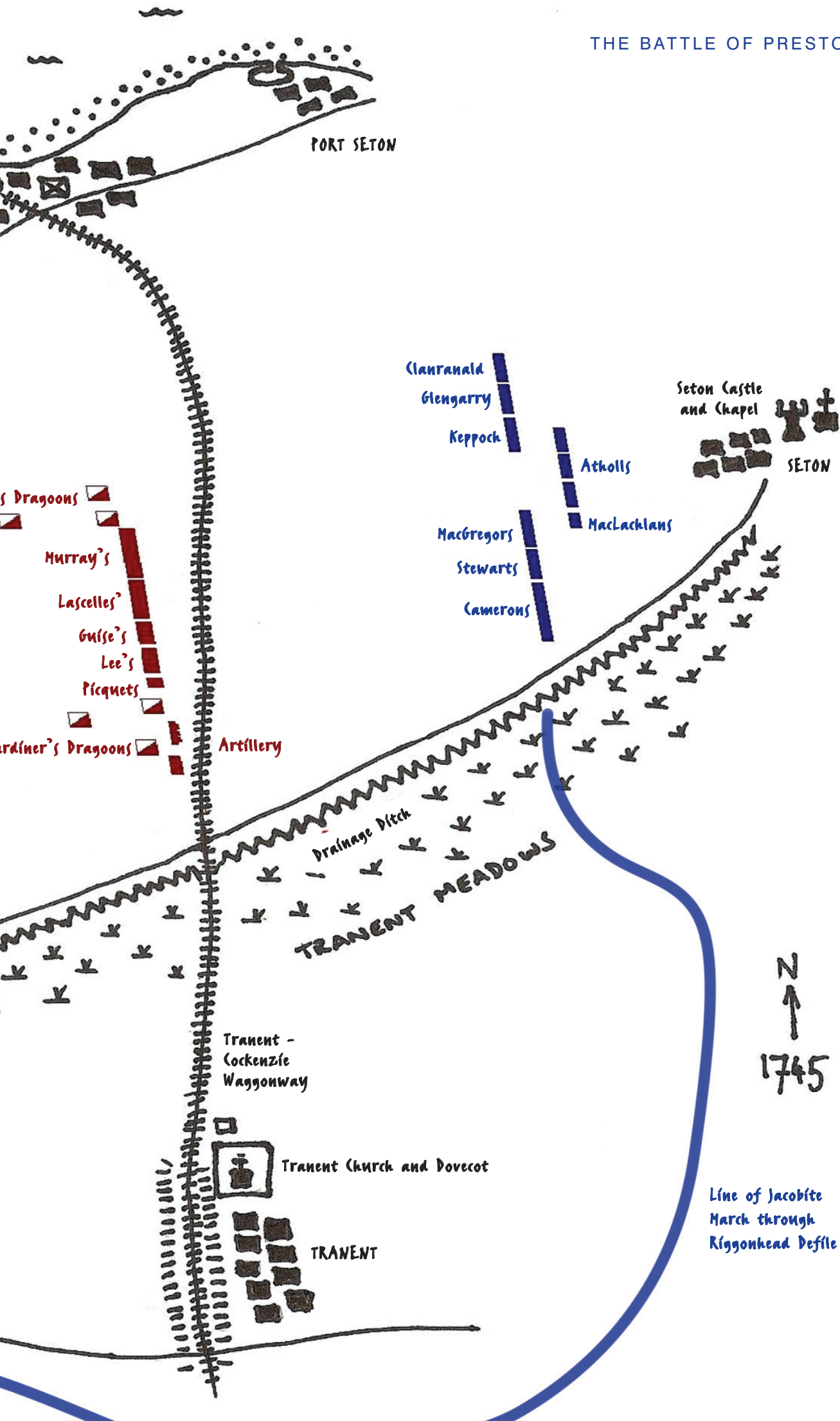
COCKENZIE

Hamilton?



The Highland Army Positions

Cope's Troops Positions





At the south end of the Jacobite front line Lord George Murray had moved further away from the ditch at the south of the field than he had intended. There was a gap of over 100 metres between the ditch and the first of his men. This was dangerous as it could have allowed the British troops to attack them through that gap. However they didn't get the chance. With the Jacobite line so stretched out it was going to be difficult to get messages from one to the other. This meant that the plan to attack could not be put into action the way it had been talked about earlier. So Lord George did what he usually did and made up his own mind what to do. He told his men to charge the enemy.

Over on the British side Cope realised that the Highlanders on the right were outflanking him. He sent word to his artillery to send two cannons over so he could fire at these Highlanders. Unfortunately, the men who had been hired to transport the cannon were not soldiers and had run away as soon as they saw the Jacobite army.

Worse than that, though, was the fact that the very next men to run away from the battlefield were the old soldiers and navy gunners who were suppose to be firing the cannon and mortars. They too saw the Highlanders charging across the open field in front of them at full speed. The gunners took most of the gunpowder that was needed to fire the cannon so there was now no chance for Cope to use his guns. However he did not wait around - he rode out in front of his army and rode along the whole line shouting that they would win the battle. Whatever Sir John Cope was, he was no coward.



The Jacobites were coming towards them very fast. Some of the Highlanders were shouting their traditional Gaelic war cries as they came running through the early morning mist that was still lying on the field. They must have presented a frightening sight to the British troops. They were used to slow and steady marching and firing but this enemy was coming at them flat out in the half-light. The regular and ordered lines of the British Army did look good and one eyewitness said they made, "a most gallant appearance," but battles are not won by how you look. By the time the Jacobites were half way towards the enemy the sun came up and the last of the mist evaporated away. The armies could now clearly see each other. The Jacobites had broken from their ordered line and

were soon running in scattered bunches towards the British lines. To the British Army officers in particular they looked like a disorganised rabble and many for them still thought that they would win the battle.



As the sun began to shine from behind the charging clansmen it glinted off the weapons they were waving: swords, muskets and Lochaber axes. Colonel Whitefoord and Master Gunner Eaglesford Griffith somehow managed to fire off nearly all the artillery weapons. All six of the mortars and five of the six cannon blasted out in the cold morning air. One of the Jacobites fell dead and another was wounded. Seeing this, the Government troops gave a cheer and the Jacobites paused, but for only a moment. Then with a shout they came running on again.



Whitefoord called on the 13th Dragoons to charge the enemy. They cantered forward in a steady line until they were within pistol shot of the oncoming Highlanders. At that point the clansmen fired their muskets and killed several of the dragoons. Then, following the Highland style of battle, they dropped their muskets and pulled their swords. They did all this without stopping for an instant. This was too much for the dragoons who turned and fled.



As the dragoons came riding back they passed the hundred or so men who had been put beside the artillery to give the gunners some protection. Their commander gave the order to fire. They fired once then they too turned and ran. The attacking column of the Jacobite army was now broken into three different parts, one group chasing after the fleeing British troops, another group at the guns and the third group running to catch up.

This was a classic chance for the rest of the dragoons who had been in reserve behind the British lines to attack. This was Colonel Gardiner's squadron and he ordered them forward. They rode forward a few paces but the clansmen at the guns started firing and Colonel Gardiner was shot from his horse. His men simply turned, dropped their flags and rode off from the battlefield leaving their wounded commander lying on the ground.





The soldiers in the rear rank nearest the artillery position also began to turn and run and they were then followed by the men in front of them. Cope was furious. He rode along the front of his line shouting at his men, "For shame, Gentlemen. Don't let us be beaten by such a bunch of bandits!" He also shouted, "Behave like Britons, give them another fire, and you'll make them run." He still believed that the Highlanders were little more than a bunch of armed robbers and would not be able to withstand an organised and steady attack. He went after his men and ordered them to regroup and re-load their muskets. This didn't work either

and no wonder. The Jacobites, who were more lightly armed, caught up with the fleeing British soldiers and were hacking away at them with swords, dirks, Lochaber axes and the terrible scythe blades that many were using as axes.



Meanwhile Lord George Murray had sent word to the Duke of Perth on the right wing that the attack was underway. Perth by now had already decided on his own that he should send his men into the battle. The MacDonald regiments ran in two columns, heading at an angle towards the 14th Dragoons. They were still 60 metres away when they turned round and rode from the field. A Jacobite eyewitness later described them as "a flock of sheep which after having run away, gathers together and then begins to run again when seized by a fresh fear."

Only one large body of British troops was now left standing on the field of battle - a regiment of around 600 men. As the Jacobites approached they fired one volley, then they too turned and ran after the dragoons. The battle was almost completely over. Prince Charlie had stayed with the reserve, he had wanted to be in the thick of the fighting. In fact throughout the Jacobite rebellion his advisers regularly had to stop him from putting himself in danger.

By the time he reached the battlefield nearly all the enemy there were either dead, wounded or captured. The charge of the Highlanders seemed to have caused panic amongst the Redcoats. But although the battle had been won, it was not quite over.



## WHAT HAPPENED NEXT

Back in those days, battles were often very bloody affairs and a great many casualties happened when soldiers were running away from the battlefield rather than fighting on it. Being on horseback the dragoons had a better chance of getting away. Some of the 14th Dragoons spurred their horses into a gallop and escaped to the shoreline to the north of the battlefield but others were not so lucky. The main body of the dragoons tried to get away from the battle by heading west. Here they came up against the 10-foot walls of Preston House and Bankton House. The breaks in the wall were just too small to let the big horses through easily and they started to get stuck. Many of these dragoons jumped from their horses but there was no way out.



*The Battle of Prestonpans by Andrew Hillhouse.*

Behind them came many of the foot soldiers also trying to flee the battlefield, and behind them came the sword-wielding Jacobites. It soon turned into a scene of absolute horror as the Highlanders swung their swords and the great scythe-axes at their enemies. Arms and legs and heads were sliced clean off. The clansmen had been told that if attacked by horsemen in battle they should slash their noses as this would provoke them into stampeding in the opposite direction. Here however they were up against the back ends of the cavalry horses and many of them had their legs hacked off in the madness of the hour. In other areas surrounding the battlefield, the fleeing British soldiers were cut down by chasing Highlanders.

As Prince Charlie and the rest of the army came onto the battlefield, the prince ordered the men to stop fighting. Soon the bloodshed stopped and the prince ordered that the enemy wounded should be treated exactly the same as his own men. He sent one of his officers off to Edinburgh, which was a famous place for doctors even then, to bring as many surgeons as he could to treat the wounded of both sides. Even though surgery in those far-off days was pretty basic this must have saved many lives.



Hundreds of British troops were rounded up as prisoners. The wounded British officers were taken to Bankton House while the common soldiers were treated outside in the parks and gardens of the house. Lord George Murray ensured that food was given out to the prisoners and enemy wounded as well as his own men. Many of the enemy wounded were allowed to go home after the battle while others were sent with the other prisoners to Perthshire. Some of them actually joined up with the Jacobite army but most of these deserted soon after.



The battle may have ended badly but the treatment of the defeated soldiers by the Jacobites was fair and just. Seven months later, after the fateful Battle of Culloden the Jacobites were not given the same treatment by the victorious British army.

Back on the battlefield however there were still small groups of British troops who had not yet surrendered and were fighting on. One of these groups was led by Colonel Gardiner who despite being wounded had gathered a body of British soldiers together and led them in hand-to-hand fighting with the enemy. He was at last cut down from behind by one of the awful scythe-axes and given a deadly wound.

Later he was found by his man-servant near the Thorn Tree and was carried to the manse at Tranent where he died of his wounds. He was found to have eight wounds on his body; two from gun

*The memorial to Colonel Gardiner in front of his home, Bankton House.*



shots to his right side and the others cuts and slashes to his head and upper body. He was a brave man to the last and a monument to him was raised in front of Bankton House in 1853. The Thorn Tree was preserved as a memorial of the battle and grew until 1930 when it was finally cut down – although its trunk was preserved.

The Jacobites lost five officers and 30 clansmen with another 70 or so wounded. The casualties on the Government side were much higher. Around 300 were killed and another 400-500 were wounded. About 1,500 were taken prisoner.

General Cope had tried to rally the dragoons but as they fled to Birslie Brae the battle field they carried him along with them. With him were the Earls of Loudoun and Home and they tried again to get their troops to turn and fight, but to no avail. The following morning the defeated general with about 400 dragoons reached the fortified town of Berwick.

Several stories are told about the plundering that went on after the battle. One story concerns some chocolate that had been found in General Cope's carriage after the battle. None of the Highlanders had any idea what it was and it was sold in Perth as Johnnie Cope's Salve, or ointment! It must have made a terrible mess if they tried to rub it on!

The carriage itself was taken and used to carry Robertson of Struan, who was an old man, back to his home in Perthshire. However the roads were so bad that in the end the vehicle was carried by Robertson's clansmen for many miles and ended its life as firewood.

The battle was a complete disaster for the British army. Apart from the dragoons who rode off with Cope and a few handfuls of stragglers almost the entire army was killed or captured. This great victory for the Jacobites no doubt helped to bring more men to their army once the news spread and troops started coming in from the north-east lowlands.

The day after the battle Charles took 800 of his victorious army back to Edinburgh, coming into the city with pipers leading them playing "When the King Enjoys His Own Again", a well known Jacobite song.

Charles now had control of Scotland but his plan had always been to invade England. By late October he was ready. Many more men had joined the Jacobite army and Lord George Murray and the other Jacobite leaders were convinced by Charles's statement that once they crossed the border English Jacobites would come to join them in their hundreds. They captured the town of Carlisle just over the border without much trouble and headed south to Derby which was only a few days' march from London. Sadly the English Jacobites Charles was depending on to join his army did not show up, and, despite the Prince's wishes, his commanders decided to turn back at Derby. On their way back to Scotland they were chased by three different British armies and though they won some notable skirmishes or small battles, the Jacobites kept retreating. They were on the back foot now.



## AFTER THE BATTLE

However on 16th January 1746 at Falkirk they again defeated a British Army, this time led by General Hawley who had replaced Cope as commander of the British Army in Scotland. Hawley assumed, as Cope had done, that the Jacobites would not stand up against cavalry. He too was wrong and the British lost over 300 men to the Jacobites 50. But this was the last Jacobite victory.

Having been chased by King George II's son, the Duke of Cumberland, all the way to near Inverness, the Jacobites were finally defeated at Culloden on 16th April. An estimated 1,000 Jacobites were killed or wounded in the battle, and many more died as the Duke of Cumberland combed the area afterwards, taking revenge on supporters.

After the battle Bonnie Prince Charlie was in hiding in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland for many months, chased by the British Army. Often he had to sleep rough, sometimes with only a single companion.

Wherever he went the people of the Highlands refused to hand him over to the authorities, even though there was a reward of £30,000 on offer for his capture, which was a huge fortune in those days. Eventually, on the 20th September 1746, he managed to get on a ship and escape to France, never to return to Scotland again.

Meanwhile, the Duke of Cumberland, nicknamed 'the Butcher', was taking revenge on everyone he thought had supported the prince. Many were executed, or had their land or estate confiscated, and many were forced to escape to the Continent or to America.

A few small groups of Jacobites continued to harass the occupying British army over the next 10 years, but by the mid 1750s the country was quiet and the ancient clan system of the Scottish Highlands had vanished forever. Prince Charlie tried to reclaim the crown of Great Britain once more as part of a French invasion fleet in 1759. This attempted invasion was beaten off by the British Navy at the Battle of Quiberon Bay on 20th November and, despite the stunning victory of Prestonpans at the very start of the campaign, Jacobitism began to fade into history.



*This cairn was built near the battlefield in 1932 as a memorial to the battle.*





