



Sample Chapter

Forbes: A Story of Scotland

By B. R. Forbes

Chapter Seven: Blood and Bond

1719–1746

Bound in Blood, Divided in Loyalties

The 1715 Jacobite rebellion was fueled by the resentment over the Union, frustration over unfulfilled economic expectations, exacerbation of religious divisions, and alienation from the new German monarch, George I. The revolt failed due to the lack of planning, uninspired leadership, and a dearth of foreign support. Armed with careful organization, inspired leadership, and strong overseas backing, the Jacobite cause could have been a grave danger to the British crown. Such was the peril that confronted George II, the king's heir, three decades later—when once again the Forbes family played pivotal roles in the crisis.

When William, 13th Lord Forbes, died in 1730, his nine-year-old son Francis succeeded as 14th Lord Forbes. On Francis's death without issue in 1734, his uncle James, the former Jacobite, became the 15th Lord Forbes. James was deeply religious, while his father, William, 12th Lord Forbes, embodied more traditional, conservative values rooted in duty, continuity, and cautious governance. Their personalities reflect a generational shift from pragmatic stability to spiritual zeal and political risk. Over time, James' religious fervor was tempered with moderation and steadiness. His son, James Forbes, Master of Forbes, served in the British Army, thus binding the Forbes chiefly line to the British government. He became a cautious patriarch, whose neutrality was often the safest course.

This impartiality was not shared by his cousins, Duncan Forbes of Culloden and Alexander Forbes, Lord Pitsligo, who were two of the most consequential figures of the age. They embodied the deep divisions within Scotland and within Clan Forbes itself: Duncan Forbes was the British government's chief representative in the north, while Lord Pitsligo

was one of the most respected Jacobite adherents. Both shared deep moral convictions. Bound by blood and by integrity, Culloden and Pitsligo were divided in their bonds of loyalty.

As an Advocate and then as Lord President of the Court of Session, Duncan Forbes of Culloden was praised for the impartial administration of justice and for resisting excessive punishments for rebels. Forbes's motivations were rooted in preserving civil order, strengthening Scotland's economy, and reconciling law with loyalty.

Lord Pitsligo was admired even by opponents for his honor, piety, and moral character. Pitsligo's loyalty was unwavering to the Stuart dynasty. His devotion was not opportunistic but lifelong and principled, rooted in his Episcopalian faith and opposition to the Union. He believed the Stuart cause represented legitimacy and moral order, and his participation bolstered the Jacobites with renewed conviction.

While others were motivated by self-interest and advancement, Duncan Forbes and Lord Pitsligo were men of integrity whose reputations rested on honor, principle, and a deep sense of duty. Their contrast in allegiances is not a contradiction but the clan's dual legacy of embracing both the stability of government and the moral imperative for change.

Crossroads of Two Worlds

Duncan Forbes of Culloden stood at the crossroads of two worlds: the Highland communities whose loyalties and grievances shaped Scotland's turbulent politics, and the distant ministers in London who demanded order and obedience. As Lord Advocate and later Lord President of the Court of Session, he became the government's trusted voice in the north, translating clan concerns into policies acceptable to Westminster while tempering the harsh edge of law with humanity. His career was defined by this delicate balance—upholding the authority of the British state, yet showing compassion for those caught in rebellion, poverty, or disaffection. In Forbes, the Highlands found a mediator who sought not only to enforce justice but to reconcile it with mercy, preserving both civil stability and the dignity of the people.

Duncan Forbes had assisted his brother, John Forbes, 4th laird of Culloden, and Simon Fraser, 11th Lord Lovatt, in defending Inverness against a Jacobite siege in 1715. Duncan's loyalty was rewarded in March 1716 when he was appointed Depute-Advocate. He was tasked with prosecuting Jacobite prisoners held in Carlisle, England. He pleaded for clemency to Sir Robert Walpole, First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer, in 1716, and warned that: "if some such measure is not pursued, it is with the last degree of regret I tell you, that The Pretender will gain

many more friends by the punishment of the Rebels, than he will lose by their overthrow.”¹

As a newly-appointed Lord Advocate, he prosecuted rioters during the 1725 Malt Tax Riots, sparked by the extension of the English malt tax to Scotland. The fiercest protests rampaged through Glasgow and spread through Edinburgh, Stirling, Dundee, Ayr, Elgin, and Paisley.² Again, Forbes counseled moderation.

When his brother John Forbes, 4th laird of Culloden, died in 1734, Duncan inherited the Culloden estate as the 5th laird. In 1737, Forbes accepted the appointment as Lord President of the Court of Session, Scotland’s highest judge, similar to the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court in other nations. He corresponded with London ministers, promoted economic development, and advanced Scottish Enlightenment principles that emphasized rational inquiry over tradition or dogma.

At the crux of the government and the governed, he warned of the growing dissatisfaction of the Scottish people. He cautioned that “the poverty of the country, and the want of employment for the younger men, makes them prone to adventure in any desperate cause.”³ He noted that “the Highlanders are poor, proud, and accustomed to arms; they are easily seduced by promises of foreign aid, and their chiefs retain too absolute a power over them.”⁴

He also cautioned that “The clergy of the Episcopal persuasion, though tolerated, are disaffected, and their influence upon the laity is dangerous to the peace of the kingdom.”⁵

His warnings about unemployment, foreign aid, and Episcopal influence provide insightful—and prophetic.

Trying His Fortune in Scotland

While Duncan Forbes of Culloden was sounding the alarm over domestic matters, a crisis was developing overseas.

Even after the failure of the 1715 rebellion, James Francis Edward Stuart attempted another desperate grasp for the British crown. He had planned to invade England with 5,000 Spanish troops and take Scotland with a force led by

¹ Forbes, Duncan. 1815. *Culloden Papers: Comprising an Extensive and Interesting Correspondence from the Year 1625 to 1748*. London: T. Cadell and W. Davies

² Wallace, Valerie. 2010. “Presbyterian Moral Economy: The Covenanting Tradition and Popular Protest in Lowland Scotland, 1707–c. 1746,” *The Scottish Historical Review*. Vol. 89, No. 227. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press

³ Forbes, Duncan. 1815. *Culloden Papers: Comprising an Extensive and Interesting Correspondence from the Year 1625 to 1748*. London: T. Cadell and W. Davies

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

King Charles XII of Sweden. Charles's death in 1718 ended the Swedish involvement. Yet Stuart pushed ahead with the Scottish attack. In April 1719, a small Spanish expedition with Jacobite exiles landed at Stornoway on the Isle of Lewis. In June, they moved to the mainland and advanced toward Inverness, only to be met at Glenshiel by Scottish troops under George Keith, 10th Earl Marischal. The engagement was brief, and the Jacobites were decisively defeated.

After repeated defeats by James Francis Edward Stuart, Jacobitism found a new champion in his son, Charles Edward Stuart. Stuart was born in 1720 in one of Pope Clement XI's residences in Rome, the elder son of James Francis Edward Stuart and Maria Clementina Sobieska, granddaughter of the Polish king Jan III Sobieski. As the grandson of the deposed King James II and VII, he was popularly known as "Bonnie Prince Charlie," although he was never recognized as a legitimate prince by the established British monarchy. Both Stuart and the ruling monarch, George II, were great-great-grandsons of King James VI and I. Stuart was descended through the male line, while George was through the female line.

After Maria Clementina died in 1735, Charles's father, James, spent the next few years "in a perpetual if mild ferment of Jacobite plans, and more than one Scots Jacobite travelled to Rome to lay projects before the King, and to indulge in sentimental raptures over the young Princes."⁶

In 1740, James Drummond, 6th Earl of Perth and "3rd Duke of Perth,"⁷ compiled "an Account of the Numbers the Highlanders can bring out." He confidently stated that "all those noblemen will serve the king and many of them can raise several hundred of men, tho not Highlanders, yet reckned better then any of the Lowlanders." Although he had given no proof of continued interest in the Jacobite cause, James, 15th Lord Forbes, "was counted upon to put into the field 600 men, as part of the grand total of sixteen thousand."⁸ Contrary to this assurance, Lord Forbes did not engage in this attempt. His son James, Master of Forbes and later 16th Lord Forbes, had joined the king's army. At the age of twenty-one, he was commissioned as a captain in the 25th Regiment of Foot in 1746.

With the Duke of Perth's "account," King Louis XV of France and his uncle, King Philip V of Spain, agreed in 1743

⁶ Tayler, Alistair and Henrietta. 1939. *The Stuart Papers at Windsor: Being Selections From Hitherto Unprinted Royal Archives, With Introduction and Notes*. London: John Murray.

⁷ The title "Duke of Perth" had been created by Stuart's father, James II and VII, while in exile in 1701. This, as were other Jacobite titles, were never recognized by the legitimate British government, although successors continued to claim the title of Duke.

⁸ Tayler, Alistair and Henrietta. 1937. *House of Forbes*. Edinburgh: Third Spalding Club.

to cooperate in an invasion of Great Britain and the restoration of the Catholic Stuart monarchy.⁹ Maurice de Saxe, Count of Saxony and Marshal of France, sailed with 13,000 men from Dunkirk to the estuary of the Thames River, but the ships were wrecked only a few miles out of the harbor. While the French abandoned this effort, “the young Pretender would not drop his intentions of trying his fortune in Scotland; and though his means of success were very different from what were originally intended.”¹⁰

In 1745, “with only seven adherents, £4,000 in money, and 2,000 stand of arms, he landed on the 25th of July in a remote and lonely bay of the West Highlands; where collecting 2,000 men, he hastened his March to the south.”¹¹ This landing sparked a renewed effort to reestablish the Stuart monarchy in Great Britain.

This Mad Rebellious Attempt

Through his work in the Court of Sessions, Duncan Forbes of Culloden maintained a wide circle of correspondents. One of these was Norman (or Normand) MacLeod of MacLeod, member of Parliament for Inverness-shire between 1741 and 1754 and 22nd chief of the Clan MacLeod.¹²

On August 3, 1745, MacLeod alerted the Lord President of Stuart’s invasion: “To my no small surprise, it is certain that the Pretended Prince of Wales is come on the Coast of South Uist and Barra.” He reported that “he has but one ship, of which he is aboard ; she mounts about 16 or 18 Guns.”¹³

He assured Forbes that Sir Alexander Macdonald and he did not support this cause, and encouraged their neighbors to withhold all assistance for “this mad rebellious attempt.”¹⁴

The Lord President immediately notified the British government of the invasion through his correspondence with John Hay, 4th Marquess of Tweeddale. Tweeddale served as a Scottish representative peer and Secretary of State for

⁹ Harding, Richard. 2013. *The Emergence of Britain's Global Naval Supremacy: The War of 1739–1748*. Boydell Press.

¹⁰ Forbes, Duncan. 1815. *Culloden Papers: Comprising an Extensive and Interesting Correspondence from the Year 1625 to 1748*. London: T. Cadell and W. Davies.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Dewar, Peter Beauclerk. 2001. *Burke's landed gentry of Great Britain: together with members of the titled and non-titled contemporary establishment*. London: Burke's Peerage & Gentry UK Limited.

¹³ Forbes, Duncan. 1815. “Letter No. CCXLVI,” *Culloden Papers: Comprising an Extensive and Interesting Correspondence from the Year 1625 to 1748*. London: T. Cadell and W. Davies.

¹⁴ Ibid.

Scotland, which also made him Principal Keeper of the Signet and a Privy Counsellor to King George II.¹⁵

Forbes wrote to Tweeddale on August 8, 1745, that he would travel immediately from Edinburgh to Inverness, “as my presence there may be of more Service to the public than it can be of here, should the Report, which I look upon as highly improbable, have any foundation in Truth.”¹⁶

He expressed the opinion that: “I am persuaded that none of the Highland Gentlemen, who have ought to lose will, after the Experience with which the Year 1715 furnish'd them, think proper to risque their Fortunes on an attempt whith to them must appear desperate.”¹⁷

Forbes wasted no time heading north from Edinburgh and reached his Culloden estates by August 13. The next day, he made a full report to Cosmo George Gordon, 3rd Duke of Gordon, noting that “the allarm which this attempt has already given the Government, will occasion the immediate march of a body of troops into the Highlands.”¹⁸

He also suggested that France’s motive for financing the invasion was to divert the British government from the European wars. He encouraged “men of fortune & figure” to “show their dislike to this attack (I may say) upon the libertys of Europe, as well as the libertys of this country.”¹⁹

Another of the Lord President’s correspondents was Sir Alexander Macdonald, 7th Baronet, 14th Chief of Sleat, Chief of Clan Macdonald of Sleat.²⁰ He wrote on August 11, 1745, that “some of our neighbours of the main land have been mad enough to arm and join the Young Adventurer mentioned in Mac Leod's letter to you.”²¹

He reported the loyalties of several of his neighbors in the islands but assured Forbes “that we will have no connection with these madmen” and that “they'll endeavour to retire to their islands.”²²

Zealous Attachment to the Present Government

¹⁵ Stephen, Leslie; Lee, Sidney, eds. 1891. "Hay, John (d.1762)." *Dictionary of National Biography*. Vol. 25. London: Smith, Elder & Co.

¹⁶ Forbes, Duncan. 1815. *Culloden Papers*. London: T. Cadell and W. Davies.

¹⁷ Forbes, Duncan. 1815. *Culloden Papers*. London: T. Cadell and W. Davies.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Cokayne, George Edward. 1900. *Complete baronetage*. Exeter: W. Pollard & Co.

²¹ Forbes, Duncan. 1815. *Culloden Papers*. London: T. Cadell and W. Davies.

²² Ibid.

Learning of the invasion, King George II appointed Sir John Cope as commander of military forces in Scotland.²³ Sir Cope placed a regiment of soldiers under the direct command of Duncan Forbes of Culloden. In his letter to the “Officers of Lord Loudoun's Regiment” on August 14, 1745, he commended Forbes’s service in the 1715 rebellion and that he “has at all times distinguished himself by a Zealous attachment to the present Government.” He then transferred a part of the Earl of Loudoun's Highland Regiment in the North of Scotland under Forbes’s command, “whose direction you are to receive and follow.”²⁴

On August 17, Normand MacLeod of MacLeod notified the Lord President of Stuart’s intent to raise his father's standard to gather more support: “the Place, Glenfinnon, which is the outlet from Moydart and Arisack to Lochaber.”

²⁵ In fact, Stuart did rally a large force at Glenfinnan on August 19, 1745, and led his troops eastward to Invergarry Castle.

On August 21, the provost of the city of Aberdeen asked the Lord President whether the rumors of a resurrection were true: “Our town is much alarmed this afternoon by the accounts of ane invasion and insurrection in the West Highlands” and he asked that “you would let us know what truth is in the matter.”²⁶

Forbes confirmed the reports in a letter dated August 24: “What you say you have been inform'd in relation to it is true.” He advised the provost that “to take care by all proper means that the peace be preserved, & to discourage as much as possible fools from running upon certain ruin.”²⁷

On August 29, 1745, the Lord President received an update on the strength of the rebel army from Thomas Fraser, 2nd laird of Gortuleg. The force included 2,030 Highlanders from Clan Cameron, Clan MacDonald of Clanranald, Clan MacDonald of Keppoch, the Stewarts of Appin, and Clan MacDonnell of Glengarry. The Jacobite army also included recruits from Knoydart, Glencoe, and Glenmoriston.²⁸

Concerned about this growing rebel army, Field Marshal John Dalrymple, 2nd Earl of Stair, proposed that the British government recruit additional Highlanders into the army. In his memo to the ministry in August 1745, he suggested

²³ Sedgewick, Romney. 1970. *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1715-1754*. Oxford: University Press.

²⁴ Forbes, Duncan. 1815. *Culloden Papers*. London: T. Cadell and W. Davies.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Warrand, Duncan, Editor. 1923. *More Culloden Papers*. Inverness: Robert Carruthers & Sons.

²⁷ Forbes, Duncan. 1815. *Culloden Papers*. London: T. Cadell and W. Davies.

²⁸ Ibid.

“to grant a number of blank Commissions, to be distributed among the well-affected Clanns, as the Lord President of the Session, shall think proper.”²⁹

Accordingly, the Marquess of Tweeddale informed the Lord President of this plan on September 4, explaining that “such a number of Highlanders being joined into regular Companies will not only prevent more men from rising for the Pretender's Service but a part of them may go and live at discretion in the Country which the Rebels leave...”³⁰

On September 13, Forbes informed military commander Sir Cope that he would undertake the recruitment “to the best of my judgement.” He cautioned that he would not “omit the Clans that have heretofore shew'd zeal; & it seems to me to be undispensably necessary to repose confidence in those who, tho' thought formerly against us, have on this occasion absolutely refused to give any countenance to the Rebels, & have used their best endeavours, & in several instances with success, to prevent the frenzy of others.”³¹

That month, Forbes raised twenty independent companies from among those clans who remained loyal. However, “when he had raised the companies and provided them with officers, he found himself without arms to equip them or money to pay them.”³²

Between October 23, 1745, and February 2, 1746, the Lord President issued British army commissions for captains that included George Monro, Alexander Gun, Patrick Grant, George Mackay, Peter Sutherland, John MacLeod, Normand MacLeod of Waterstein, Normand MacLeod of Bernera, Donald MacDonald, William Macintosh, Hugh MacLeod, Alexander Mackenzie, Colin MacKenzie of Hiltown, James MacDonald, John MacDonald, Hugh Mackay, William Ross, and Colin Mackenzie. He issued seventeen commissions for lieutenants, and he recruited eighteen ensigns.³³

David, Lord Elcho, later declared that these commissions prevented more Scots from joining the Jacobite cause: “The President Duncan Forbes receiving a present of Twenty Companies of 100 men each to distribute amongst the Highland chiefs as he pleased, intirely putt a Stop to most of these Gentlemens balancing, as a Great many that the

²⁹ Forbes, Duncan. 1815. *Culloden Papers*. London: T. Cadell and W. Davies.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Murray, Charles de Bois. 1936. *Duncan Forbes of Culloden*. London: International Publishing Company.

³³ Forbes, Duncan. 1815. *Culloden Papers*. London: T. Cadell and W. Davies.

Prince Counted upon accepted of them.”³⁴

By September, Stuart had marched into Perth. There, he appointed Lord George Murray, sixth son of John Murray, 1st Duke of Atholl, as commander of the Jacobite army. Murray had participated in the 1715 and 1719 Jacobite attempts but had been pardoned and swore allegiance to George II in 1739.³⁵

The Lord President informed Sir John Cope on September 12 that Stuart, the “Young Chevalier,” had at most “not above 4000 Men at Perth last week; the greatest part Highlanders; that many of them had no fire-arms, & were otherwise very ill armed.”³⁶

Stuart pushed on to Edinburgh, which he entered on September 17, 1745. Secure in his base in Edinburgh, Stuart moved his armies eastward. British commander Cope was confident that his troops could defeat the poorly armed Jacobite army of fewer than 2,000. However, much of Cope's infantry lacked experience. When the armies clashed at Prestonpans on September 21, 1745, his artillerymen fled when the Jacobite army charged.³⁷ This led to an unexpected victory for Stuart. Much alarmed at this win, the Lord President and John Campbell, Earl of Loudoun, recruited an additional 2,000 troops in Inverness to oppose this rebellion.

With this victory, Stuart also continued to assemble his forces and military leaders. Among those leaders were James Drummond, 6th Earl and “3rd Duke of Perth”; his brother Lord John Drummond (and later “4th Duke of Perth”); and their cousin William Drummond, 4th Viscount Strathallan.

A Worthie Virtuous Gentleman

Stuart also turned to Alexander Forbes, 4th Lord Pitsligo, another of the most consequential figures in the conflict.

Pitsligo had returned from exile in 1720 and lived a largely quiet, contemplative life at Pitsligo Castle, devoted to religious philosophy, correspondence with mystical thinkers, and writing, while maintaining his loyalty to the Stuart cause. Though he remained a committed Jacobite, Pitsligo did not actively plot rebellion during these years. He opposed the Union and refused to take the oath of abjuration, which excluded him from parliamentary life. His loyalty

³⁴ Wemyss, David, Lord Elcho. 1907. *A Short Account of the Affairs of Scotland in the Years 1744, 1745, 1746*. Edinburgh: David Douglas.

³⁵ Henshaw, Victoria. 2014. *Scotland and the British Army, 1700-1750: Defending the Union*. New York City: Bloomsbury Academic.

³⁶ Forbes, Duncan. 1815. *Culloden Papers*. London: T. Cadell and W. Davies.

³⁷ Tomasson, Katherine; Buist, Francis. 1978. *Battles of the Forty-five*. New York: HarperCollins Distribution Services.

to the Stuarts was principled and lifelong, but expressed more through moral conviction than political maneuvering. His reputation for honor and piety earned him trust and respect among the gentlemen in the area around Pitsligo. This would prove critical to the Stuart cause.

While Edinburgh Castle remained in government hands, Stuart set up “court” in the royal palace of Holyrood House. His father, James, was proclaimed King of Scotland, and Charles was named his Regent.³⁸ Stuart styled himself “Charles Prince of Wales and Regent of Scotland, England, France and Ireland and other Dominions thereto belonging.”

Having secured Holyrood, Stuart was determined to claim the British crown in London. He needed more troops to do so. John Murray of Broughton, the Secretary to Stuart, wrote to Alexander Forbes, Lord Pitsligo, on September 29, 1745: “His Royal Highness has sent orders to all his friends to join furthwith, being determined to march Into England as soon as possible and to beg you may use all the Diligence possible, especially as our horse are not numerous.”³⁹

At sixty-seven years of age, Lord Pitsligo decided to join the cause and to encourage his friends and neighbors to join him. He did so out of a sense of duty rather than fervor: “if there was any enthusiasm in it, it was of the coolest sort, and there was as little remorse when the affair miscarried as there was eagerness in the beginning.”⁴⁰

As he later explained, he believed that “sovereignty in Britain was shared between prince and the governed, but that constitution had been subverted” in 1688/89 and that “Parliament had ceased to be a utilitarian agent for the good of the people and instead provided a designing few with the means to govern arbitrarily.”⁴¹

His involvement inspired support from among his tenants and neighbors: “When it became known that Pitsligo was coming out with the rebels he was quickly joined by some local lairds, gentlemen, and others of lesser note.”⁴² Some gentlemen from Boyne and Enzie made it a condition of their going out “that Lord Pitsligo go as their head.”⁴³

Other Jacobites were heartened by Lord Pitsligo’s involvement. John Murray of Broughton, 7th Baronet of Stanhope

³⁸ Duffy, Christopher. 2003. *The '45: Bonnie Prince Charlie and the Untold Story of the Jacobite Rising*. London: Orion.

³⁹ Tayler, Alistair and Henrietta, Editors. 1930. *Jacobite Letters to Lord Pitsligo 1745-1746*. Aberdeen: Milne & Hutchison.

⁴⁰ Forbes, Alexander, Lord Pitsligo. 1747. *Memsie Apologia*. Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Library.

⁴¹ Pittock, M.G.H. Pittock. 1996. “The Political Thought of Lord Forbes of Pitsligo,” *Northern Scotland*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

⁴² Joss, S.; Whatford, C. 1995. *Forbes of Pitsligo: Guided by Grace*.

⁴³ Ibid.

and secretary to Charles Edward Stuart from 1740 to 1747, wrote of him: “The deservedly most popular man in his Country, not beloved but adored, being ever employ'd in doing good offices to his neighbours.”⁴⁴

According to historian John Home: “On the 9th of October, Lord Pitsligo arrived in the camp at Duddingston; he was attended by a great many gentlemen from the counties of Aberdeen and Banff, who with their servants well armed and mounted, formed a body of cavalry that served under his command: he also brought with him a small body of infantry (consisting of six companies), which was called Lord Pitsligo’s foot.”⁴⁵

Irishman General John O’Sullivan, adjutant general and quartermaster general of the Jacobite army, called Lord Pitsligo “a worthie virtuous gentleman, who brought us about 950 gentlemen and their servants.”⁴⁶ Pitsligo led his troops into Aberdeen on October 5, 1745, and arrived in Edinburgh on October 9, 1745. The newspaper *Caledonia Mercury* reported on October 9 that Stuart appeared in “Lowland dress” to review the troops and that “the Right Hon. the Lord Pitsligo came into the camp from Linlithgow, at the head of a squadron of Horsemen, consisting of 132 Knights, Freeholders, and landed Gentlemen” and noted that “they are all Gentlemen of experience, and are mostly above 40 years of age.” He added that “the Lord Pitsligo’s squadron are all in Highland Dress, amounting in all to 248 men.”⁴⁷

Nine days later, on October 18, Pitsligo received his commission as colonel of his own troop of horse: “Charles Prince of Wales and Regent of Scotland, England, France and Ireland and other Dominions thereto belonging, to our Right Trusty and well beloved Lord Pitsligo, Greeting. We reposing especiall trust and confidence in your courage, Loyalty and good conduct do hereby constitute and appoint you to be a Collonell of his majesty’s forces and to take your rank in the army as such from the date hereof.”⁴⁸

Seize upon the Person of Duncan Forbes

While Pitsligo was consolidating his command of the Jacobite cavalry, Duncan Forbes of Culloden became the target of a kidnapping plot. Back on September 23, Stuart had issued a warrant to James Fraser of Foyers “to seize upon the

⁴⁴ Bell, Robert Fitzroy, Editor. 1898. *Memorials of John Murray of Broughton*. Edinburgh: University Press by T. and A. Constable for the Scottish History Society.

⁴⁵ Home, John. 1802. *The History of the Rebellion in the Year 1745*. London: A. Strahan. New-Street Square.

⁴⁶ Tayler, Alistair and Henrietta. 1938. *1745 and After: An Account of the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745, Together with the Letters of O’Sullivan From the MSS Among the Stuart Papers at Windsor Castle*. Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson & Son.

⁴⁷ *Caledonia Mercury*, October 9, 1745. 1890. “List of Persons Concerned in the Rebellion,” *The Scottish History Society Volume VIII*. Edinburgh: University Press.)

⁴⁸ Tayler, Alistair and Henrietta, Editors. *Jacobite Letters to Lord Pitsligo 1745-1746*. 1930. Aberdeen: Milne & Hutchison.

person of the above-named Duncan Forbes, and when you have so seized and apprehended him, to carry him prisoner to us at Edinburgh.”⁴⁹

However, not until the night of October 15 did Fraser and about 200 Frasers from the Stratherrick lands attack Culloden House. Their plan to capture Forbes failed, “owing to the spirited reception which this body of men met with from the artillery and small arms of the garrison which defended the castle under Mr. Forbes's own direction.”⁵⁰

The Lord President’s daughter, Isobel, wife of James Fraser, 2nd laird of Achnagairn, described the attack in a letter to Rev. David Ross, minister of Tarbat. She reported that on the previous Wednesday morning, no less than 200 “Stratherick men” had slipped through the bushes and, “when observ'd by the centrys emideatly as they were discovered they shot six shot at the Gentries who gave them a warm return.” She added that “a small canon was fired which made them fly.”⁵¹

The Lord President suspected the complicity of Simon Fraser, 11th Lord Lovat, chief of Clan Fraser. Lovatt had long maintained contacts with the exiled Stuart court, hoping to use Jacobite support to strengthen his claim to the Lovat estates. However, when the rebellion broke out under the Earl of Mar, Fraser calculated that siding with the government would serve him better. He had assisted Duncan Forbes of Culloden and his brother John in defending the town of Inverness against a Jacobite siege in 1715. For his loyalty, Fraser was granted ownership of the Lovat estates. This solidified his position as chief of Clan Fraser.

After the attack on Culloden House, the Lord President confronted him: “I can no longer remain a spectator of your lordship's conduct, and see the double game you have play'd for some time past.” He added that “you have now so far put off the mask, that we can see the mark you aim at...”⁵² Lovat would pay for this duplicity.

A Great Deal More Mischief in their Retreat

On October 31, Stuart launched his invasion of England, the true purpose of his French backers. He marched out of Edinburgh “at ye head of his Guards and Lord Pitsligo’s horse, and lay that night at Pinckie house.”⁵³ With Lord

⁴⁹ Warrand, Duncan, Editor. 1923. *More Culloden Papers*. Inverness: Robert Carruthers & Sons.

⁵⁰ Forbes, Duncan. 1815. *Culloden Papers: Comprising an Extensive and Interesting Correspondence from the Year 1625 to 1748*. London: T. Cadell and W. Davies.

⁵¹ Fraser, Isobel. 1910. *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness, Vol. XXVI*. Inverness: The Gaelic Society of Inverness.

⁵² Forbes, Duncan. 1815. *Culloden Papers: Comprising an Extensive and Interesting Correspondence from the Year 1625 to 1748*. London: T. Cadell and W. Davies.

⁵³ Wemyss, David, Lord Elcho. 1907. *A Short Account of the Affairs of Scotland in the Years 1744, 1745, 1746*. Edinburgh:

George Murray as commander, his army “consisted of Lochyells, Glengarys, Clanronalds, Keppochs, and Ardshiels regiments of foot, and Elcho’s and Pitsligo’s horse.”⁵⁴ The army entered England unopposed on November 8.⁵⁵

Lord George proposed that half of Stuart’s forces should besiege Carlisle, just south of the Scottish border. Robert, son of John Forbes, 7th laird of Newe, participated in this siege. On November 13, 1745, Lord George’s regiments blockaded the city while James Drummond, “3rd Duke of Perth,” took charge of the attacking force. By morning, the town surrendered, and the regiments rejoined Stuart’s forces in the march to Derby on November 29, 1745.

On November 28, “Pitsligo’s horse march’d to Manchester, where they were very well received, and a mob appeared publicly for the Prince, and Several of them show’d an inclination to enlist.”⁵⁶ Stuart gained additional recruits from English Jacobites and anticipated French reinforcements landing in Southern England. He reached Derby on December 4, but the reinforcement never arrived. Lacking the necessary support to invade England, Stuart returned to Scotland. He retreated with the rest of the army back to Glasgow and on to Stirling.⁵⁷ There, on January 17, Stuart used French artillery to begin a siege of Stirling Castle.

Stuart had appointed Lord Lewis (Ludovick) Gordon as the Jacobite Lord Lieutenant of Aberdeenshire, responsible for raising troops in northeastern Scotland. By that time, Normand MacLeod of MacLeod had occupied the town of Inverurie with about 500 British troops. On December 23, 1745, Gordon feigned an attack with 300 soldiers and captured the town with his remaining 600 troops.⁵⁸ Many men were killed, and about fifty prisoners taken, among them were Thomas Forbes of Echt and Adam Gordon of Ardoch, the younger.⁵⁹

Despite this minor victory, Stuart spent the rest of the month in a hasty retreat to Glasgow, which his army reached on December 26, 1745. Solicitor General of Scotland, Robert Dundas of Arniston, the younger, reported to the Lord President in a letter dated December 29, 1745, that “they then began to retreat with astonishing rapidity,” and noted that “they have done a great deal more mischief in their retreat, than when they marched up to England.” For example,

David Douglas.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Duffy, Christopher. 2003. *The '45: Bonnie Prince Charlie and the Untold Story of the Jacobite Rising*. London: Orion.

⁵⁶ Wemyss, David, Lord Elcho. 1907. *A Short Account of the Affairs of Scotland in the Years 1744, 1745, 1746*. Edinburgh: David Douglas.

⁵⁷ Tayler, Alistair and Henrietta. 1937. *House of Forbes*. Edinburgh: Third Spalding Club.

⁵⁸ Simpson, Peter. 1996. *The Independent Highland Companies, 1603 - 1760*. Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers Ltd.

⁵⁹ Leslie of Balquhain, Charles Joseph. 1869. *Historical Records of the Family of Leslie from 1067 to 1868-9*. Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas.

the army demanded 1,000 pairs of shoes, “but, as there was not such a number in the town, they provided themselves by taking them off the feet of the Inhabitants in the Streets.”⁶⁰

With Pitsligo and his cavalry, Stuart’s Jacobite army was victorious against British forces in Falkirk on January 17, 1746. On April 11, 1746, Pitsligo and the rest of the Jacobite army marched from Elgin to Forres and Nairn.

Many exhausted troops left the Jacobite army. With more Royalist troops advancing toward him, Stuart lifted the siege on Stirling on February 1, 1746, and led his main force north toward Inverness.

Lord George Murray captured heavy cannon from the retreating government forces at Stirling Castle after the Jacobite withdrawal from the unsuccessful siege. He sent the artillery to Stuart, who was on the march to Inverness. Then he marched from Perth to Blair Castle on February 3. He commanded Lord Pitsligo with his troops to Peterhead, on the north coast near Aberdeen, to secure funds and artillery from a “Spanish Ship had landed for the Princes use at that place.” He then dispatched Lord Elcho with the rest of the horse to Aberdeen, “where he himself arrived with the rest of his Colum on the 8th.”⁶¹

Pitsligo was given little time to accomplish his mission to Peterhead. Two days later, he was urged to rejoin the main part of Stuart’s forces. In a letter dated February 5, 1746, Lord George explained that “I hear nothing certain of the motion of the Enemy but that yesterday at Midday none were past Stirling except 500 Campbells to Dumblean and a few Dragouns that came to Doun by the Frews Foord.” He relayed orders from Stuart “to lose no time in joining him near Inverness.”⁶²

In a subsequent letter, Murray urged Pitsligo, then in Aberdeen, to acquire “some good horses and harnase, cartes, etc.” and “as much course tartan as can be got for me.” He also notes that “there are few men whos friendship & aprobatation I would value so much as your Lop’s. [Lordship’s].”⁶³

On February 16, Murray again writes to Pitsligo, who was then in Banff, north of Aberdeen: “I am much press’d by his Royal Highness to push forward towards Inverness and propose being, with the few that are with me, at Elgin

⁶⁰ Forbes, Duncan. 1815. *Culloden Papers: Comprising an Extensive and Interesting Correspondence from the Year 1625 to 1748*. London: T. Cadell and W. Davies.

⁶¹ Wemyss, David, Lord Elcho. 1907. *A Short Account of the Affairs of Scotland in the Years 1744, 1745, 1746*. Edinburgh: David Douglas.

⁶² Tayler, Alistair and Henrietta, Editors. *Jacobite Letters to Lord Pitsligo 1745-1746*. 1930. Aberdeen: Milne & Hutchison.

⁶³ Ibid.

tomorrow, where I halt a day to give time to those behind to join.”⁶⁴

At that time, Duncan Forbes of Culloden, Lord President, and John Campbell, Earl of Loudoun, were rallying about 2,000 fresh recruits in Inverness. Learning that Stuart was on the march toward them with a Jacobite army of about 4,000 experienced soldiers, they retreated to the Isle of Skye and left the town to the rebels.

Murray informed Pitsligo, still at Banff, on February 19, of the latest Jacobite success: “His Royal Highness’ Army took possession of the Town of Inverness yesterday, the troops that were in the Town having ferried over to Rosshire.”⁶⁵

Stuart then commandeered the Lord President’s Culloden House. However, he provided specific instructions to his troops, “requiring you to protect and defend the house of Colloden and furniture from any insults or violence that may be done by any person or persons, except such Orders as are issued by us. Given at Inverness, 28th Feb. 1746.”⁶⁶

By February 20, Pitsligo had moved to Elgin, where Stuart appointed him “Governor of Elgin.”⁶⁷ On February 21, 1746, Murray relayed to Pitsligo his additional orders: “In the meantime, as your Lordship knows everything that is most usefull for the common cause, His Royal Highness desires you will take the joint command [of the army at Elgin] with [William Drummond] the Viscount of Strathallan so as everything may be ordered for the best...”⁶⁸

On the same day, John Murray, secretary to Stuart, provided Pitsligo with instructions on housing troops and collecting funds and supplies: “I find he inclines that our Horse and so many of the ffoot should continue at Elgin, Forres and this place and even it is thought it would not be amiss that some were at Fochabers.”⁶⁹

He specifically advised Pitsligo that “Lord Strathallan with the Perthshire squadron will be at Elgin tomorrow and your Lordship will please order quarters to be provided for them, and it is hoped in Conjunction with my Lord Strathallan you will give all the necessary orders for the inbringing of the Cess [tax funds] and meal.”⁷⁰

⁶⁴ Wemyss, David, Lord Elcho. 1907. *A Short Account of the Affairs of Scotland in the Years 1744, 1745, 1746*. Edinburgh: David Douglas.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Forbes, Duncan. 1815. *Culloden Papers: Comprising an Extensive and Interesting Correspondence from the Year 1625 to 1748*. London: T. Cadell and W. Davies.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

Stuart was counting on the continued assistance from France, specifically four squadrons of Irish soldiers that were to land at Aberdeen. However, “mainly due to the efforts of the Royal Navy, very little of the help sent to the Jacobites by France actually arrived.”⁷¹ In addition, the Jacobite army was reduced to one regiment of horse, the Irish regular cavalry of Fitz-James, under the command of Colonel Robert O'Shea. Stuart decided to strip the squadrons of Kilmarnock and Pitsligo of their horses to bolster Fitz-James's Horse.

Rather than becoming distracted from the European wars, as the French had hoped, King George II took direct action by handing command of the British Army to his twenty-four-year-old son, Prince William Augustus, Duke of Cumberland. On February 27, Cumberland and his troops reclaimed the city of Aberdeen. Throughout March, Stuart and the Jacobite army based themselves at Culloden, engaging in limited skirmishes and trying to gather information on Cumberland's movements.

Yu See All is Going to Pot

The affairs of the Jacobites slowly began unraveling over the next few weeks. Stuart fell ill in Elgin. Lord John Drummond took Gordon Castle, and on March 19, he crossed the Spey. He then made his headquarters in Speymouth, about thirteen miles outside Elgin. Drummond wrote to Pitsligo, still in Elgin: “the only danger we are in being from a strong body of the Enemies which is at Strath-bogy and Keith.”⁷²

On March 29, Lord John Drummond complained to Pitsligo that the requested Horse Guards were not arriving: “I beg your Lordship wou'd tell them once for all that I expect that six of them will come here every day and that if they miss I shall be obliged to abandon this post and give the Prince an account of the reasons for doing it.”⁷³

These constant appeals for horse patrols from Lord Pitsligo's troops indicate that Stuart's army had few remaining cavalry. The Horse Guards, under Lord Kilmarnock, numbered about one hundred, and some of those horses had been transferred to officers in Fitz-James's regiment. The hussars had been reduced to even fewer, and Pitsligo's own troop, once 300 strong, had shrunk to half its former strength.

More logistical challenges were addressed in another letter from Sir Thomas Sheridan to Pitsligo on April 4, 1746:

⁷¹ Pollard, Tony, Editor. 2009. *Culloden: The History and Archaeology of the Last Clan Battle*. South Yorkshire: Pen & Sword Books Ltd.

⁷² Tayler, Alistair and Henrietta, Editors. *Jacobite Letters to Lord Pitsligo 1745-1746*. 1930. Aberdeen: Milne & Hutchison.

⁷³ Ibid.

“Now it happens that horses, i.e., the best and strongest kind of them that the country affords, as well as proper carts, are what is most wanted for the carrying the Artillery and Princes Baggage.”⁷⁴

In the meantime, Cumberland inexorably moved his troops toward the Jacobite army, as indicated by a flurry of letters over the next few days. James Drummond’s aide-de-camp Major Hale wrote to Pitsligo on April 11: “The Enemy instead of coming to Focubirs [Fochabers] are gone to Cullene [Culloden] to make, as we suppose, a junction with those who came to Bamf [Banff], so that his Grace the Duke of Perth desires that the soldiers at Elgin may return to their former quarters, but they must be ready at a moment’s warning.”⁷⁵

Lord James Drummond, wrote that same day: “we are informed that the enemy are already past Keith.” He added that “it will be necessary to march the foot that is at Elgin beyond Forest [Forres] because Forest and the neighbourhood of it must be the place where the troops that are upon the north of Spey must quarter.”⁷⁶

As a result of this intelligence, William Drummond and Pitsligo brought their troops through Elgin to Forres and Nairn. On April 12, Cumberland’s army reached Fochabers and crossed the River Spey without opposition. The forces pushed through to Elgin, Alves, and Nairn by April 14.

By that time, all Jacobite forces had withdrawn to Culloden. The high command disagreed over the site of the anticipated battle. Colonel John William O’Sullivan, chief of staff, proposed Drumossie Moor, believing that the comparatively level, open field also provided “tactical potential in the enclosures on the two flanks.”⁷⁷

Lord George Murray preferred higher ground, such as south of the Nairn-Inverness highway near Dalcross Castle, or the heights on the River Nairn’s right bank, overlooking the steep valley near Daviot Castle.⁷⁸

Lord Murray proposed an overnight march for a surprise attack while the government forces were celebrating Cumberland’s twenty-fifth birthday on April 15 at Nairn. However, the maneuver was aborted, and “on the morning of 16 April hundreds of stragglers were still missing.” Arguments flared among the Jacobite high command, and the

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Pollard, Tony, Editor. 2009. *Culloden: The History and Archaeology of the Last Clan Battle*. South Yorkshire: Pen & Sword Books Ltd.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

field of battle defaulted to some distance east of that proposed by O’Sullivan.

On the morning of April 16, the British army first advanced in three lines of about 6,000 infantry soldiers in nine battalions. The Jacobite front line originally comprised some thirteen battalions of about 3,630 men, “but all the accounts agree that their ranks were severely depleted by straggling and that there may in fact have been several hundred fewer at the start of the battle.” ⁷⁹

A British cavalry division circled to the right of the Jacobite infantry and formed in its rear of. “It was the Jacobites who fired first, almost certainly in response to the threat that had suddenly developed in their rear.” ⁸⁰

British cannon fired about two rounds, and, according to Joseph Yorke, an aide-de-camp to Cumberland, “I could plainly perceive that the rebels fluctuated extremely, and could not remain long in the position they were then in without running away or coming down upon us.” He added that “in two or three minutes they broke from the centre in three large bodies like wedges.” ⁸¹

By that time, the Jacobite command structure had broken down “largely because the officers were all out in front and dropping fast.” ⁸² O’Sullivan rode up to Stuart’s guard to warn him of an impending defeat, “yu see all is going to pot” and “Yu can be of no great succor.” He commanded the guard to “seize upon the Prince & take him off.” ⁸³ Stuart eventually obeyed the advice and fled. In all, the battle lasted no more than twenty-five minutes. British military records indicated casualties of fifty dead and 250 wounded. Eyewitness accounts estimate Jacobite casualties between 1,500 and 2,000, though some sources place the number as high as 4,000. ⁸⁴

Many members of Clan Forbes participated in the Battle of Culloden—on both sides. On the British side, Lord Forbes’s son, Captain James Forbes, fought under Colonel Hugh Sempill, 12th Lord Sempill. ⁸⁵ On the Jacobite side,

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Maxwell of Kirkconnell, James. 1841. *Narrative of Charles Prince of Wales’ Expedition to Scotland in the Year 1745*. Glasgow: Maitland Club.

⁸¹ Black, Jeremy. 1990. *Culloden and the ’45*. Stroud: Alan Sutton Publishing Ltd.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Tayler, Alistair and Henrietta. 1938. *1745 and After: An Account of the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745, Together with the Letters of O’Sullivan From the MSS Among the Stuart Papers at Windsor Castle*. Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson & Son.

⁸⁴ Pollard, Tony, Editor. 2009. *Culloden: The History and Archaeology of the Last Clan Battle*. South Yorkshire: Pen & Sword Books Ltd.

⁸⁵ Tayler, Alistair and Henrietta. 1937. *House of Forbes*. Edinburgh: Third Spalding Club.

about eleven Forbeses joined the rebellion.⁸⁶

A cannon shot shattered the head of Jacobite George Forbes of Skellater's horse at the beginning of the battle. Skellater escaped and returned home, which had been saved by the courage of his wife, Christian Gordon. William Kerr, 4th Marquess of Lothian (styled Earl of Ancram from 1735 to 1767), had orders from the British government to burn Skellater House. However, he was met at the front door by Lady Skellater with her five young children, none over the age of eleven. She pleaded for mercy, and Lord Ancram "did not burn the house, being pacified by the manner in which Forbes' wife came out to meet him."⁸⁷ Instead, Ancram captured Skellater's stronghold, Corgarff Castle, which was still held by a small force of Jacobites. Skellater later escaped to France and obtained a Captain's commission in the French Ogilvy Regiment, founded in 1747 by Jacobite David, Lord Ogilvy.

Jacobite Jonathan Forbes, 13th and last laird of Brux, also escaped after Culloden. Remaining in the country and assuming various disguises, he evaded capture. He eventually succeeded his two older brothers and became the 13th and last laird of Brux.

Only a few days after the Jacobite defeat, the Lord President received an account of the battle from John Hossack, former Provost of Inverness: "The Duke's Army behaved well, as if they fought for the liberty of their Country; and, indeed, one wing of the Rebels fought as if they meant to win or dye; many of them are killed, wounded, and made Prisoners; and believe between 3 & 4000."⁸⁸

He assured Forbes that "I presume to think there is no body of the Rebels in the way your Lop [Lordship] has to pass; though the dispersion will turn many loose, and make travelling dangerous." He further guaranteed that Culloden House itself was secure: "Immediately after the Action, Capt. Hugh Forbes Apply'd to His Royal Highness; & he ordered 50 Men with Officers to protect the House, Policy, and Lands of Culloden."⁸⁹

Sir Alexander Macdonald later informed the Lord President of Stuart's fate: "When the young Pretender made his unhappy visit to Skye, from South Uist, in a small boat, he landed near my house, in woman's clothes, by way of being maid-servant to one Florence Macdonald, a Girl of Clanranald's family, now a prisoner with General Campbell." He

⁸⁶ MacLeod, Rev. Walter, Editor. 1890. "A List of Persons Concerned in the Rebellion," *Publications of The Scottish History Society Volume VIII*. Edinburgh: University Press

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Forbes, Duncan. 1815. *Culloden Papers: Comprising an Extensive and Interesting Correspondence from the Year 1625 to 1748*. London: T. Cadell and W. Davies.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

went on to explain that his wife, Lady Margaret, went to Hugh MacDonald of Kingsburgh (or Kingsborrow), and together they agreed to “hurry him off the Country as fast as possible.”⁹⁰

The British government shifted its focus to prosecuting the rebels and deterring future revolts. One of the most notorious trials was that of the Lord President’s duplicitous neighbor, Simon Fraser, Lord Lovat, who had been captured after the Battle of Culloden. The Duke of Cumberland issued a commission to James Fraser of Castle Leathers to seize all Lovat’s lands, since Lovat “has been guilty of various treasonable practices & acts of Rebellion against his Majestie &, his Government.” Cumberland ordered that “you are hereby authorized & impowered to take into your Charge the several Lands belonging or lately belonging to Lord Lovat.”⁹¹

Lovat remained imprisoned until his execution on April 9, 1747. Sir Arthur Forbes of Craigievar, 4th Baronet, reported to the Lord President: “It’s astonishing wt what resolution and sang-froid Lovat dyed to-day” and that he claimed “his principles had been constant and invariable; that in the course of his life he had never betrayed them, nor any body.”

⁹²

Alexander Forbes, 4th Lord Pitsligo, escaped after the battle with battalion commander David, Lord Ogilvy, and David Hunter of Burnside, a captain in the Prince’s Life Guards. They fled first to Elgin and then to his family home at Pitsligo Castle near Rosehearty. From there they traveled to Bergen, Norway and then to Sweden. Pitsligo’s estates were seized in 1748, and his title was attainted. He was declared an outlaw, and a reward was offered for his capture. Even so, Lord Pitsligo later returned to Scotland. For four years, he hid from government forces before taking shelter with his son at Auchiries, under the name of Mr. Brown. He was held in such high esteem that the people of Aberdeenshire sheltered and protected him for sixteen years.

In the last years of his life, he wrote several religious works. He died of old age on December 21, 1762, and was buried in the family vault of the old church of Pitsligo.

Duncan Forbes of Culloden and Alexander Forbes, Lord Pitsligo, embodied Scotland’s deepest contradictions, yet were united by integrity, conviction, and an unwavering sense of duty. One labored to preserve civil order, restrain vengeance, and govern by law and moderation. The other sacrificed rank, estate, and safety for a vision of moral

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

legitimacy rooted in faith, conscience, and ancestral loyalty. When the rebellion ended, and the smoke cleared, it was the character of these men that endured—leaving a Forbes legacy of honor on both sides of a conflict that forever changed the course of Scottish history.