

The Jacobites

A visual overview of a rebellious movement

Jacobitism in England, Scotland and Ireland

The Jacobites were named from the Latin word for James, *Jacobus*, and initially were supporters of James II of England and VII of Scotland – the last Catholic monarch. In 1688, James' son and heir (James Francis Edward) was born, thus displacing from the succession his daughter, Mary, and her husband William of Orange, who were both Protestants. This precipitated a crisis that led to the so-called 'Glorious' Revolution where James was replaced by William and Mary as joint monarchs.

Jacobitism was an important source of rebellion and discontent and a very real threat to the Protestant succession at certain points over the next 60 years. Jacobite dreams of 'restoring' the Stuarts were ended at the battle of Culloden in 1746 with the victory of the Duke of Cumberland over Charles Edward Stuart (Bonnie Prince Charlie). However, hopes of the restoration of the Stuarts persisted far longer.

English Jacobites were largely linked to the Tory party, which was out of power during the long period of Whig oligarchy from 1715 to 1760. The most famous was Robert Harley, a former Lord High Treasurer to Queen Anne who was imprisoned from 1715 to 1717 by the Whig government on suspicion of secret plotting with James Francis Edward Stuart, who was in exile in France.

In Scotland, support for Jacobitism was partly linked with nationalism, particularly after the Act of Union with England in 1701. The Highland clans proved some of the most enduring supporters of Jacobitism. However, the majority of clan leaders consistently supported William III. Some of the most notorious battles and skirmishes involved the Highlanders. The Glencoe Massacre took place on 13 February 1692 when the king's soldiers were ordered to murder members of the clan MacDonald in their beds to make an example of those disloyal to the Crown. In the event, a heavy blizzard hampered the army and although they killed 38 people, around 450 escaped in the snow. At Culloden, a Jacobite army of around 7,000 faced a government force of about 8,000. Over 1,200 Jacobites were killed with only around 50 losses on the government side. Although it is often portrayed as the Scots against the English, in reality there were Scottish and English fighters on both sides.

Jacobite resistance in Ireland led to war between 1689 and 1691, with Irish rebels supported by French troops. After defeat at the Battle of the Boyne in July 1690, James fled to France and never returned. The rebels were finally defeated at the battle of Aughrim in 1691. The war in Ireland was a sectarian conflict, with the Catholic population pitted against the Protestants.

Jacobite culture

In spite of a succession of military defeats, Jacobitism was kept alive by a strong political culture. Drinking toasts to the 'king over the water', reading Jacobite novels and singing songs that romanticised the Jacobite cause brought people together in opposition to the Whig government.

Well-known folk songs were adapted to include Jacobite verses and when the tunes were played could signify Jacobite sympathies while avoiding prosecution. The 'Bonnie Highland Laddie' song cycle, which emerged in the 1720s, depicted a feminised Scotland being liberated by a Highlander. In Ireland, Jacobite songs were often sung in Gaelic to avoid prosecution. Code words were used in popular print culture to represent the Stuarts, for example the 'rising falcon', the 'Spanish Cormac' or 'the fair lad'. Sometimes the Gaelic words for 'six' and 'mouse' were used together to mean 'Seamus' (the Irish word for James).

The white rose and white cockade became associated with the Jacobite cause from around 1700. They were used as a means of protest across the country. In London, for example, in 1716 the price of white roses rocketed because of the number of displays.

However, the most obvious form of dressing to defy the government was the use of tartan. In both the 1715 and 1745 rebellions, the Jacobite armies dressed in tartan (whether they were Scottish or English). In 1746, an act was passed prohibiting the wearing of Highland dress (apart from troops in the British army). For a first offence, the punishment was 6 months in prison and if repeated the offender was transported for 7 years. The law was eventually repealed in 1782 and demonstrated the power of clothing to express discontent.

Walter Scott was a key figure in rehabilitating tartan when he directed a spectacular pageant to welcome George IV to Edinburgh. The king was dressed in tartan and greeted by many of his subjects similarly clad. In his popular novels, Scott presented a version of Jacobitism that was rooted in patriotism and celebrated heroic traditions.

1688
'Glorious Revolution'. William of Orange invades England and James II flees to France

1690
Battle of the Boyne. Protestant English King William III of Orange defeats the Irish Catholics led by James II

September 1715
Jacobite uprising at Braemar, Scotland and northern England, led by John Erskine, the Earl of Mar

1716
Jacobites are disbanded

September 1745
Charles Edward Stuart claims the throne for his father at Perth. Jacobite army takes Edinburgh, defeats a British force at Prestonpans and moves south into England

December 1745
Jacobite army reaches Derby but is stopped by British troops

April 1746
Battle of Culloden is won by the British. Charles Edward Stuart escapes to Skye then to France

1689
Battle of Killiecrankie. British forces are defeated by Scottish Jacobites

1692
Glencoe Massacre of MacDonald clan

November 1715
Jacobites are defeated at the Battle of Sheriffmuir and the Battle of Preston

July 1745
Charles Edward Stuart ('Bonnie Prince Charlie') lands in Scotland on Eriskay Island

November 1745
Carlisle surrenders to the Jacobites

January 1746
Jacobites fail to capture Stirling Castle, but defeat General Henry Hawley's army at Falkirk and capture Inverness

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An Incident in the Rebellion of 1745, by David Morier (c.1753)

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