

I'll finish by reading a couple of excerpts from MacDonald's and Mackenzie's prose accounts. MacDonald's, which was in English, is of special interest, for three reasons. Firstly, he's an outstanding Gaelic poet who is now beginning to be acknowledged as comparable in stature to Burns. Secondly, being a schoolmaster who had compiled the first Gaelic dictionary ever published, Prince Charles had appointed him as his tutor in the language, and this is reflected in the text. Thirdly, although his account of the '45 was published in 1817, the manuscript on which it was based didn't come to light until 2005 when it was found in the Drambuie Liqueur Collection. I'll read from the bit in the manuscript where MacDonald tells how the Jacobite army were led through the bog at 3 a.m.

"Our march up to the enemy till we came near was without pipe or drum, in the most profound silence till the attack was begun, then all our instruments, tongues & hands were at work. As we were about to engage, MacDonald of Glenaladel of Clanronald's Regiment was ordered with a detached party of 60 chosen men, double armed, to take possession of the enemy's baggage at Port Seton as soon as he should perceive the main bodies engage. As the Prince left his guard in the march to the attack, talking earnestly with the Duke of Perth & Clanronald & giving his last orders & injunctions, and returning to his guard, as I happened to pass near by him, he with a smile said to me in Erse, "*Gres-ort, Gres-ort,*" that is, Make haste, make haste.

"As in our march to the attack the right was obliged to stop a little till the left should come up, at this time the enemy's guards first perceived us, for we heard them call out "Who is there? Who is there? Cannons, cannons, get ready the cannons, cannoners." But our quick march & sudden and intrepid attack soon brought us into the midst of our enemies, where we soon put them to rout, the general and a few horse and officers escaping with difficulty to Berwick, Major Cawfield with a few dragoons to Leith & Edinburgh Castle.

"Now whatever notion or sentiments the Low Country people may entertain of our Highlanders, this day to a diligent spectator amidst all the blood shed (which at the first shock was unavoidable) there were many proofs of their humanity & mercy: for I can with the strictest truth & sincerity declare that I often heard our people call out to the soldiers if they wanted quarters, and we the officers exerted our outmost pains to protect the soldiers from their first fury, when either through their stubbornness or want of language they did not cry for quarters. And I observed some of our private men run to Port Seton for ale & other liquors to support the wounded. And as one proof for all, to my own particular observation a Highlandman supported a poor wounded soldier by the arms till he should ease nature, and afterwards carried him on his back into a house, and left him a sixpence at parting. In all which we followed not only the dictates of humanity, but the orders of our Prince, like the true father of his country."

I've pondered this last anecdote for a long time, and I don't see how MacDonald could have observed all this, even down to the sixpence, unless the Highlandman in question was himself.

Finally to Mackenzie. Being in Gaelic, his account makes good use of the heroic imagery provided by the language. It's based on three things: Chambers's *History of the Rebellion*, his own imagination, and genuine Gaelic anecdotes that were still going the rounds in the 1840s. For example, according to Chambers, a Jacobite called Colquhoun Grant kills an officer, takes his horse, and pursues a small party of dragoons all the way to Edinburgh, where they clatter up the High Street into the safety of the castle. The gate slams shut behind them, and when Grant arrives he sticks his dagger into it. But when Mackenzie tells the story, the dagger becomes a sword.

Here's another example. What Chambers calls "investing themselves with the spoils of the slain and wounded" and "ransacking the house of Colonel Gardiner" is expressed by Mackenzie in Gaelic as *glanadh na b-àraich*, literally 'cleansing the battlefield'. Chambers, and Chambers only, speaks of 'rough old Highlanders' wearing the fine shirts of redcoat officers over their clothes, and little boys 'strutting about with large gold-laced cocked hats on their heads'. Both authors tell a story about a man who helps himself to a watch, but Mackenzie clearly knows more about it than Chambers. The man was from Barra, he says, it was a gold watch, and he got it by felling an English trooper with a single blow of his sword. Chambers says he sold it to 'some person for a trifle', Mackenzie says he sold it to 'his bedfellow next morning for a pistol'. But in both versions the punchline is the same. The man didn't know the thing had to be wound up, and was glad to be rid of it, for, as he said himself: "It died last night."

Ronald Black

3rd National Biennial Symposium on Scottish Battlefields

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The Battle of Gladsmuir

A Gaelic Perspective

Talk by Ronald Black,
Prestonpans Town Hall, Thursday 14 June
3rd National Biennial Symposium on Scottish Battlefields



In this talk I'll try to present the battle through the eyes of three Gaelic-speaking individuals. One, Alexander MacDonald from Moidart, who was there on the Jacobite side as a captain in the Clanronald Regiment, and who described it in Gaelic verse and English prose. Two, Alexander Cameron from Lochaber, who was presumably there on the Jacobite side in Lochiel's Regiment and described it in Gaelic verse. And three, John Mackenzie from Gairloch, who was born sixty years later and was the first to publish an account of the battle in Gaelic prose.

I know of no accounts of the battle by any of the Highland troops who were there on the Government side, in the three under-strength companies of Lord Loudoun's newly-raised Highland Regiment – men from Sutherland and other parts of the mainland Highlands. They were taken prisoner and many of them joined the Jacobite army.

My main theme is the name of the battle. MacDonald calls it *Preston* or *Prestonpans*, whether he's speaking in Gaelic or in English. Cameron calls it *Sliabh a' Chlambain*, the Gaelic translation of 'Gladsmuir', that is, a moor frequented by glads, gleds, hawks or falcons, Gaelic *clambain*. Mackenzie also calls it *Sliabh a' Chlambain*, showing that by the 19th century this had become the definitive Gaelic name of the battle.

There's a good explanation of why it was called Gladsmuir. I'll come to it in a minute, but first I should say that I used to believe that this name for the battle originated in the Gaelic-speaking part of the Prince's army, but I no longer think so. If it did, why did MacDonald call it Preston and Prestonpans even when writing in Gaelic, and why did Prince Charles call it 'Gledsmuire' when writing to his father in Rome on 7 October? I now think that the Jacobite high command decided to call it Gladsmuir as a deliberate act of policy, and that the name stuck among monoglot Gaelic speakers like Cameron because there was no obvious Gaelic for Preston or Prestonpans. Let me tell you what MacDonald and Cameron said about the battle in Gaelic verse, then I'll come to the explanation. First MacDonald said:

Nach goirid on a ghabh sinn air
Eòin Cop am **Prestonpans**,
Le cheithir mìle caisiche
'S na bha de mharc-shluagh ann?
Le h-ochd ceud deug militia
De smior nan Gaidheal mòr?
Gun mharbh sinn 's gun ghlac sinn iad
Le basgar chlaidhimh mhòir.

Did we not beat, just recently,
John Cope in **Prestonpans**
With his four thousand infantry
And all the horsemen that were there?
With eighteen hundred militiamen
Of the pick of stalwart Gaels
We killed them and we captured them
By the clash of the claymore.

Much later, after Culloden, in an appeal to Prince Charles to come back from abroad, MacDonald said:

Nach truagh leat fhéin mar a thachras,
Na saoidhean bh' agad ann am **Preston**
A bhith toirt dhiubh an airm 's am breacan
Le prasgan a' bhùidseir?

Don't you care what's going to happen?
That the heroes whom you had in Preston
Will be giving up their arms and tartan
For the butcher's rabble?

Cameron said in a song of praise to his chief, Lochiel:

Tha thu cinnteach á d' chinneadh
Anns gach ionad an téid thu,
'S maing dh'fheuchadh an ascaoin:
Cha bu tais an àm feum iad;
Gu h-armach achfainneach rioghail,
'S chan e strìochdadh bu bheus dhaibh
'S le faram an làmhach
Gum biodh an nàimhdean gun éirigh.
'S dearbhadh air sin **Sliabh a' Chlamhain** —
Gun d'fhuair sibh barrachd an cruadal.

You can depend on your kindred
Wherever you go,
God help those who tempt them:
They're not soft in a fight;
Armed, ready and loyal,
They're uninclined to surrender,
And at the sound of their firing
Their enemies lie lifeless.
That was proven at **Gladsmuir**
Where your toughness prevailed.

Now for the explanation. On the morning of Friday 20 September 1745 Cope's army marched west from Haddington while Prince Charles's marched east from Duddingston. Gladsmuir lay on Cope's route, just four miles west of Haddington on the post-road to Edinburgh, now the A1, but he avoided it because the enclosures near the road would be unsuitable for cavalry. At Huntington he wheeled the army off to the right and took the low road by the sea through St Germans and Seton. On the other hand, after crossing the Esk at Musselburgh the Prince's army followed a route which could well have brought them to Gladsmuir – that is, uphill to Inveresk, Newbigging and Pinkie. Here Lord George Murray received intelligence that Cope was at or near Preston, and looked likely to occupy the high ground to the south in order to get the advantage over the Jacobites. So he led the Jacobites in a quick march uphill to Fawside, then, seeing Cope's forces drawn up at Preston, occupying the ground down to the sea at Prestonpans, he made a slanting march downhill towards Tranent.

When Cope saw the enemy approaching from the south he turned his army round to face them. The redcoats now had their backs to the shore at Cockenzie. To their right was the intricate village of Preston with its parks and garden walls, still there today. To their left was Seton House. And crucially, facing their front was a bog. A deep drain had been cut along its length from west to east, a good defensive position. If the Jacobites charged downhill, they would flounder in the bog and be mown down. But it was midday and they could see that for themselves.

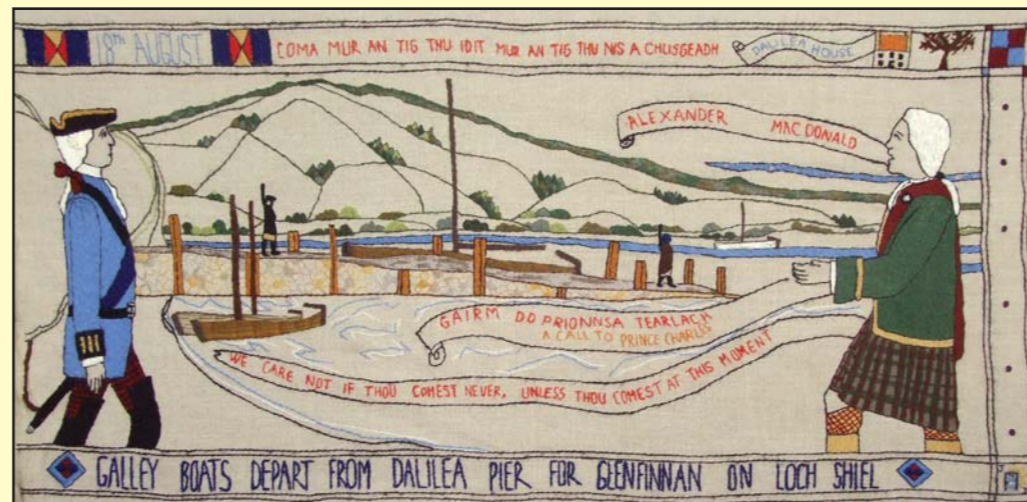
Now, Sir John Clerk of Penicuik later wrote in his memoirs, referring to Cope's army: "Few of our people behaved well in the battle, except perhaps Colonel Gardiner, who, endeavouring to stop his regiment of dragoons [from fleeing, that is], fell a sacrifice to the fury of the rebels. His own house happened to be within a quarter of a mile from the field of battle, which the rebels affected to call Gladsmoor, to make it quadrat with a foolish old prophecy of Thomas the Rhymer, 'In Gladsmoor shall the battle be', but Gladsmoor happens to be at least two miles from the field of battle, which being just at the back of the town of Preston could in no time or age have been different from what it is at present, being one of the best fields in East Lothian for all kinds of grain."

This brings us back to the 'Romance of Thomas the Rhymer', written around 1430–50. Its third and final part begins with the Otherworld Queen predicting to Thomas the invasion of Scotland under Henry IV, who died in 1413. Then she comes to a battle 'between Seton and the sea'.

*Careful shall be the first mass
Between Seton and the sea,
Then shall they fight with helm[et]s and shield[s] there
And wounded men all English shall run away,
But on the morn there shall be care
For neither side shall have the gree.*

[anxious]

[anxiety]
[victory]



Posterity lined this up with the Battle of Pinkie in 1547, despite the inconvenient facts that Pinkie is not 'between Seton and the sea' and that it was an English victory, although admittedly their further advance was blocked by Edinburgh. The poem goes on:

*Then shall they take a truce and swear
Three year and more, I understand;
There neither side shall other dare
Neither by sea nor by land.
Between two Saint Mary days
When the time waxes near long,
Then shall they meet, and banners raise,
In Gladsmuir, that is so long.
Gladsmuir, that glads us all,
This is beginning of our glee;
Great sorrow then shall fall
Where rest and peace were wont to be.
Crownèd kings there shall be slain
With **dints** sore, and wonder see;
Out of a moor a raven shall come,
And from him a shrew shall flee,
And seek the moor, withouten rest,
After a cross has been made of stone;
High and low, both east and west,
But up he shall find none.
He shall light where the cross should be
And hold his **neb** up to the sky
And he shall drink of gentle blood and free.*

[blows]

[nose]

Immediately after this, the fairy queen tells Thomas, a bastard will appear out of the west and win the final battle against the invading enemy at a place called Sandyford. There's a great deal about this in Gaelic tradition which placed Sandyford firmly on the Clyde at Glasgow. (And of course there is a Sandyford in Glasgow.)

Note that 'Gladsmuir, that glads us all, is the beginning of our glee'. It's the second-last battle. During the seventeenth century there was so much interest in Thomas's prophecies that a body of oral tradition grew up around them. The following rhyme seemed to claim Gladsmuir for Dunbartonshire or Fife:

*It shall not be Gladsmuir by the sea;
It shall be Gladsmuir, wherever it be,
And the little lowne that shall be
Is betwixt the Lowmond and the sea.*

A 'lowne' is a peaceful sheltered spot. As for the *timing* of Gladsmuir, Aberdeenshire tradition offers a verse that seems to be about Foveran Castle near Ellon, the seat of the Turing family and a major focus of Thomas Rhymer's cult:

*When Turing Tower falls to the land
Gladsmuir then is near at hand;
When Turing Tower falls to the sea,
Gladsmuir the next year shall be.*

The idea seems to be of a collapse of the castle wall first on the landward and then on the seaward side. I wonder if the latter happened in 1744? At any rate, it seems to me that in identifying Prestonpans as Gladsmuir, the Jacobites were clearing the way for that last battle on the Sandy Ford of Clyde that would settle the destiny of Scotland, even though the fairy queen's description of the victor as 'a bastard from out of the west' was problematic in propaganda terms. Prince Charles had come out of the west, but only his enemies called him a bastard. In one of his short stories Neil Munro makes Campbell of Craignish refer to him as 'Bastard Chevalier'.

For a while, fate did seem determined to bring it about, because following the retreat from Derby the Prince's army made straight for Glasgow. But the next battle took place at Falkirk. And as we know, it wasn't the last, and it didn't clear the invaders out of Scotland.

That, then, is the importance of the name Gladsmuir to the Jacobites. Through cheap printed chapbooks, and oral tradition circulating in both Scots and Gaelic, every man and woman in Scotland was familiar with the Rhymer's prophecies. A Jacobite officer, Lord Elcho, referred to our subject succinctly as 'this battle, which the Prince's army called Gladsmuir and other people Preston'.