Glenshiel 1719

by Ian Craig Weir

"The Battle of Glenshiel 1719" by Peter Tillemans

In a cold spring dawn long ago, three sailing vessels – two men-o-war and a clean-lined "runner" – glided quietly up a chill northern inlet. Above, the morning sun lit the tops of the grey hills, stretching their shadows down the length of the loch. A finger from the rising sun set the red crosses on the frigates' dun coloured mainsails afire as the vessels drifted slowly into in the lee of a rocky islet, out of which sprang a stone keep so ancient it might have been hewn whole from the surrounding granite.

See the ships stir with activity, the shrill cries of the sailors blending with the shrill offifes, the drubbing of drums mixing with the rumbling sound of wooden cannon wheels rolling across wooden decks. Anchors plash into the dark, glassy waters of the loch, sails are furled, and the little sloop comes to rest in the shadow of the keep. Files of white clad soldiers, muskets at the order, stand motionless on the cool, shadowed decks of the warships anchored in deeper water. Aboard the merchantman, a knot of bewigged gentlemen, all shortcoats and buckled shoes, turns from scanning the castle walls. One wrinkles his nose in disgust at the smell of rotting seaweed and places a fading nosegay to his face.

Eilean Donan Castle (blown up 1719, restored 1920) anyone who has watched a movie with Scottish locations has seen this place. It's open to the public, and worth a visit.

"I see no sign of Glendaurel". This from a compact young gentleman, with a broad, clean-shaven face and a soldier's bearing.

The gentleman with the nosegay; a languid, long-faced youth, replies, "he will come, my Lord Marishal, but, as I keep repeating, apparently without effect, I doubt the clans know we're here".

"Never trust a Campbell". The speaker cast a dark woolen plaid over his shoulder to keep off the morning chill, pinning it up with a stag's head brooch that sparkled in the sunlight. "I wager he'sfinding my lands rough going… but that is the Macrae" – he pronounces it, 'M'craw' – "to be sure, up on Eilean Donan."

"So, my Lord Seaforth," says the foppish youth, "he can tell us how the land lies… now then, where is our guest of honour? Ah, Don Bulano, ¿cómo está usted esta mañana? Are your men ready?"

"Sí, mi Señor, somos listos cuando usted es".

The officer, a proud, middle-aged man with a hawk's face and ferocious moustaches, steps to the gunwale and waves vigorously. Aboard the frigates, sailors begin putting out the longboats. Soon the whitecoats are clambering over the sides. The boats rock dangerously and there are cries of alarm.

"Los hombres no son buenos marineros, incluso después de cinco semanas. Que se desempeñan mejor en la tierra".

"Let us hope so señor, let us hope so". To the others, "we who know His Majesty have no reason to be hesitant, but the Faithful demand a victory, gentlemen, and a visible commitment of foreign arms, before they will step forward. These good soldiers should fulfill our part of the bargain".

"Aye, but I am thinking they are looking rather ragged, Tullibardine".

"No worse than your own clansmen, Seaforth, no worse than your own clansmen… Macrae himself looks rather like a robber, does he not?"

"He is a robber". General laughter. "Also a true man, in his own way".

Up comes the captain of their vessel; "Mes seigneurs, le bateau est prêt".

"Procédons alors" answers the round-faced soldier, "Nous allons, gentlemen".

The company descends to a waiting jolly boat and is rowed to the castle jetty. Already, NCOs are bawling orders and the longboats have begun a relay race to bring barrels and boxes ashore.

"¡Escuadrilla! ¡Actuales Brazos!" A file of whitecoats presents arms, as a flag, white with a complicated set of armorial bearings in its center, is hoisted on the castle's pole. The date is the 13th of April 1719, and for the first time in history, the soldiers of His Most Catholic Majesty of Spain stand in arms upon British soil.[1]

The Origins of the '19

The day the Spanish landed at Eilean Donan marked the last flicker of Marlborough's wars against the Bourbons. It was also the last attempt by the men of his generation to reverse the Glorious Revolution of 1688. In that fateful year, James II of the House of Stuart was deposed as King of England in favour of his son-in-law, William of Orange. King Billy's wife, Mary, and her sister, the later Queen Anne, were the last Stuarts rulers of Britain. Their father's supporters, many of whom had gone into exile with him, refused to recognize the queens' legitimacy and instead upheld the claims of his son in exile, James Francis Edward Stuart. This faction called themselves the Jacobites.

From 1689 on, at home or in exile, from open war in the Emerald Isle to secret landings and aborted plots, the Jacobites fought the British Establishment. Lacking resources, like any exile group they sought help from the enemies of the current régime, even from the enemies of their beloved England. In the early days this was not hard to do. The dissident Jacobites were a useful lever against the British Government. The Catholic Powers in particular, were interested in doing away with the heretical English monarchy and reimposing discipline on their subjects, who dared to kill and depose "Divinely-appointed" sovereigns at will. And the Jacobites made sure their hosts knew how much the common people "longed for their return". France proved the Jacobites' greatest mainstay.

The situation became tougher for the Jacks in the years of 1714-15. First, the War of the Spanish Succession was over and they were seen as embarrassment in some quarters of the French Administration. Second, with Queen Anne's death in 1714, James Stuart – Eduarde to his French friends – could have been given the throne legitimately (indeed, on the Queen Mother's advice, he had reined in his followers in anticipation that he would be), but he refused to accept the terms, which included abandoning the Catholic Faith. In any case, a rival political faction, the Whigs, launched a palace coup to make sure their own man was crowned instead. A German princeling, George of Brunswick-Luneburg (Hanover), became King George I. He had a legitimate claim, but only in the 53rd degree. In reaction, a group of disgruntled noblemen raised the Highland Clans for "King" James, but the attempt failed, mainly because of ineptitude.

Down but not out, the Jacobites would have wished to seek help from their primary backer, the French king, Louis XIV. For Louis, the Jacks were more than catspaws; he and James II had been personal friends, and ideologically the Georgian régime was an abomination to the French. He gave public recognition to James Edward as "James III". But the Sun King died exactly when he shouldn't have, on the eve of that Jacobite Rising. With his death, a Regent, the Duc d'Orléans, nephew of the late king, took power. D'Orléans' position was insecure; Britain, now in the grips of her own propaganda campaign, demanded that James E. Stuart's ties with France be severed, and paid the Regent's most trusted advisor, the Abbé Dubois, a massive stipend to see that their wishes were carried out. The last thing the Regent needed was a war with England, so he gave James Edward the boot.

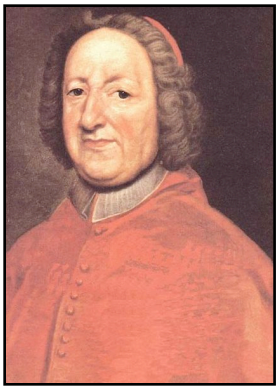
Understand that James had very little money. He had two pensions, one from old King Louis, which was now stopped, and one from his mother – but that had to go to support his followers. Money was collected sporadically from the faithful, but was drained away by his hangers on. Few of the exiles of quality had any gainful employment, but at the same time their position required them to put on a display of wealth. So there was simply no way that the Jacobites could finance their own army. Within Britain, the Highlanders of northern Scotland were a ready source of armed men (really the only source barring the Army itself), but to James, as to most of Europe, they were uncouth barbarians who could not be trusted; especially, the English people would not tolerate kilted mercenaries swaggering through the streets of London Town. For a successful régime change, professional soldiers were needed; the Clans were a last resort.

At first, Charles XII of Sweden, the "Mad King of the North", looked like he would be willing to help. He was no friend of King George, who had designs on some of Sweden's Continental territories. James even considered moving his Court to Stockholm. But all Charles wanted was money for his own schemes. After his agents discovered James was penniless, he lost interest. However, negotiations with Sweden did bring renewed backstairs contact with the Spanish Court.

[There are persistent rumours that Charles did not "lose interest". It is suggested that his invasion of Danish-owned Norway, though undertaken for the understandable reasons of territorial aggrandizement and the need to open up the Skagerat, also had the goal of providing a launch pad for an invasion of England.]

James Butler, 2nd Duke of Ormonde

Spain, ruled since 1701 by Louis XIV's grandson, Felipe V (of the Anjou branch of the Bourbons), was, as of 1718, embroiled in a war against France (!), the Habsburg Empire, Britain, and Holland, and was groping about for a stone to throw at someone. They had a contact with the Jacks in James Butler, 2nd Duke of Ormonde. He had commanded in Spain during the succession war (against Felipe) and had briefly taken the Duke of Marlborough's place as Commander in Chief of the British Army, but had been forced to flee England at the time of the Whig coup because he had Jacobite ties. Shortly before



Cardinal Guilio Alberoni

Louis XIV's death, Ormonde had asked the old king for money on behalf of James Edward. The Sun King being skint, Ormonde was given a letter of introduction to Felipe. While the English were working to create a Quadruple Alliance to stop Spanish ambitions and enforce the peace of Utrecht, the Spanish hoped that the Stuarts, if restored to power, would be suitably grateful and support Spanish efforts in southern Europe. The key player in Felipe's relationship with the Jacobites was Cardinal Alberoni, his chief minister.

Beginning his career as the son of an Italian gardener, Alberoni had wormed his way into a position of absolute authority in Spain. Essentially a creature of intrigue, he cared nothing for geopolitics, manipulating nations as he had once manipulated individuals, solely to amass power and wealth. A sworn enemy of France's Regent, he had brought on this European war with the twin objects of bringing down Orléans and rendering himself even more indispensable to the Spanish Crown.

Now, Alberoni courted the Jacobites at his monarch's behest. This was not to his liking. He hoped to detach England from her current unnatural alliance with France, in order to undermine the Regent's position. But early in 1718, while England and Spain were technically at peace, a squadron of the Royal Navy under Admiral Byng[2] destroyed a Spanish squadron at Cape Passano. This action forced the minister's hand. The Spanish King, incensed, like his namesake Phillip II, displayed a rare outburst of initiative and angrily demanded a declaration of war.

Cardinal Alberoni himself was prone to tantrums, and this check to his ambitions was cause for one. If Britain could not be detached from France through negotiation and intrigue, perhaps a small insurrection would work. Meanwhile, he promoted both a commercial treaty between Felipe and James Edward, and a defensive/offensive alliance.[3] Being recognized as a legitimate Power was a major step for James.

A New Armada

It had been centuries since the Spanish had contemplated attacking England directly; the wars against the Protestants of Holland were sufficiently taxing in themselves, and after the destruction of Phillip II's Armada in 1588, with its great waste of lives, materiél, and money, there was little interest in repeating the effort. Indeed, by the Thirty Years War, the Spanish Empire, despite its enormous silver reserves in the Americas, was having a tough time holding its own. France was the rising power, as French arms, under the Duc d'Engien and the Great Condé, showed the world when they repeatedly defeated Spain's best armies in those years. Spain also, unlike France or Britain, was still a collection of imperial provinces rather than a unified nation state. By the days of Louis XIV, Spain was but a shadow of her former self. In 1701, the Habsburg dynasty of Spain died out and was replaced by the Bourbons, leading to yet another war – the War of the Spanish Succession.

With a new dynasty, anything was possible, perhaps even an alliance with England against France. But in the mind of own citizens and her enemy, old stereotypes remained. The English were heretic dogs: pirates who supported the Dutch rebels, burned Spanish seaports, and sank Spanish ships, after stripping them of the silver that the Spaniards had worked so hard torturing natives to obtain. English soldiers had even dared to invade Spain herself, in support of enemies of the régime. They were trying to horn in on the Caribbean Trade, of which Spain held a monopoly by Divine Right (or Papal Bull anyway, which amounted to the same thing). As for the English, Spain was still represented in their minds by Catherine of Aragon's daughter, Bloody Mary, and they had no desire to experience the Inquisition firsthand. With regard to the current conflict, England's policymakers were petrified less by the Inquisition than the prospect of a Bourbon bloc covering all of Western Europe, which is what would transpire if Felipe were able to dispose of the Duc d'Orléans and the sickly five-year-old that was Louis XV.

Alberoni was an opportunist, but since England showed no signs of pulling in her horns, his preparations continued. He intensified Spanish demonstrations of friendship toward the Jacobite Court. James was invited to make a State Visit to Madrid. More importantly, Alberoni got together with Ormonde on November 5th, 1718 (Ormonde slipping across the Pyrenees disguised as a valet), and put into motion a startling plan for the invasion of Britain, involving 29[4] Spanish warships, 5,000 Spanish troops, and 30,000 "stands of arms" for the English Jacobites.

There was a world of difference between the famous Spanish Armada and Alberoni's own creation. The earlier Armada was part of a decades-long struggle orchestrated by the Habsburg Emperor and the Pope to crush the heretical Queen Elizabeth and replace her with a Catholic – either Mary Queen of Scots, or a Spanish princess. Alberoni's attempt was a hastily contrived, cynical diversion. On the surface the aim was the same – place a Catholic on the English throne by force of arms, "to the general rejoicing of the populace". This is how the Jacobites, the Pope, and possibly the King of Spain saw the affair, but Alberoni was simply trying to pressure the British Government into dropping their support for the French.

The fleet would proceed from Cadiz to Corunna, where the soldiers would board and proceed to England, most likely landing at Bristol, or in Cornwall. At the same time, a small party of Scottish Jacobites would land in the Highlands of Scotland as a diversion. This last was Ormonde's idea (following the template of the '15 as it would have been arranged "if *he* had been in charge"). Overall, however, Ormonde had little hope of the plan's success, openly declaring it to be madness; no doubt he felt relieved when the Spaniards limped into port after being ravaged by twelve days of storm off Cape Finisterre (*now* ask why the Spanish only tried to invade England twice). As a matter of record, the Armada was assembled in the Galician ports, ostensibly as reinforcements for the Italian theatre. Leaving on March 7th, they arrived off Cape Finisterre on March 28th.

James Edward Stuart arrived at Corunna just in time to witness the return of the remnants (he had a habit of doing that sort of thing, which no doubt contributed to his permanently gloomy mien). This disaster put paid to the Spanish Minister's grand scheme and James' hopes. The troops were sent instead to the Italian theatre – Alberoni was an opportunist, after all. Unfortunately the diversionary party, sailing independently from San Sebastian on March 8th,[5] never received word that the operation had been canceled.

James Keith, brother of the Earl Marishal of Scotland

None of the accounts agree in detail, but apparently the two Spanish frigates concerned somehow slipped through the very heart of Admiral Norris' Channel Squadron – 16 ships of the line – and arrived at Stornoway in the Outer Hebrides, where they rendezvoused with the 25-ton *Fidéle*, a merchant vessel, on April 4th. The Spanish ships carried George Keith, 10th (and last) Earl Marishal, with Ormonde's Commission of Array (for raising troops in the King's name) in his pocket, his brother James Keith (who would die a Prussian Field Marshal, at Hochkirch, in 1758), and 307 Spanish soldiers, as well as 2,000 muskets, 5,000 pistols, and large quantities of ammunition. The *Fidéle* had come from France, leaving the mouth of the Seine on March 17th, and carried the fundraisers of the expedition, who had set off without informing the Armada they were coming. Perhaps they wanted to see how their money was being spent. It was unlucky that they made the rendezvous. On board the *Fidéle* were William Murray, Marquess of Tullibardine, and William MacKenzie, 5th Earl of Seaforth, Murray's young brother, Lord George, and a number of "Irish Officers" – which in the language of the day could equally mean "Highlanders". The latter were the renegade "Old Borlum" Macintosh, who had led a mass breakout of Newgate Gaol in 1716, the fearsome Cameron of Lochiel, who once bit out the throat of an English soldier in hand to hand combat, MacDougall of Lorn (overlords of this author's ancestors), Clanranald MacDonald, and the slippery Campbell of Glendaurel – all high rollers who had been intimately involved with the '15.

As was typical with the Exiles, a dispute soon broke out between the Ormonde and Tullibardine factions over who was in command. The Earl Marishal had Ormonde's commission, but once Keith realized he was meeting his backers, he declared his willingness to serve in a subordinate capacity – provided any of them had a better right. And here, the tale gets confusing. Tullibardine did have such a commission, signed by James E. Stuart himself, though it dated from the aborted Swedish Plot, but for some reason he kept silent. A plan was then put forward to march on Inverness, the "capital" of the Highlands, which reportedly had a garrison of only 300 men and was a good target for the diversionary action they were supposed to be engaged in. Keith supported this proposal, and at that point, Tullibardine, who did not, pulled his commission out. Tullibardine by all accounts was a rather ineffectual, dithery young man. Some believe he was the tool of Campbell of Glendaurel, who represented the discredited Earl of Mar. The latter was the man primarily responsible for the '15 – and for its failure. Mar's men opposed Ormonde's men on principle (ironically, neither Mar nor Ormonde were hardcore Jacks – they just disliked one another). Possibly if Keith had not supported such a bold move, Tullibardine would have been told to keep his mouth shut. But, in the event the latter advocated remaining on the island of Lewis until they saw which way the wind blew.

Marquess of Tullibardine

Despite this contretemps, on April 4th[6] the conspirators left Lewis and landed on the mainland at Gairloch, depositing some of the members, including Lord George Murray and Glendaurel, who dispersed to sound out the Clans. The rest of the party was forced back to Lewis by a storm, but soon sailed back over to the mainland, dropping anchor in the sheltered waters of Loch Alsh on April 13th. These waters were controlled by Seaforth's vassal clan, the "Wild MacRaes", hereditary wardens of the local castle, Eilean Donan. The wrangling continued (Glendaurel rejoining them on the 14th), even as they put a garrison into the castle and set up a supply dump behind the kirk at the Croe of Kintail[7]. No one could understand why the Mar faction wanted to delay, but delay they did, mainly through constant argument. It may be that Tullibardine and Glendaurel, mindful that this was a diversionary operation, were simply trying to rein in the hotheaded Keith brothers, who had been at a loose end and had signed on to the endeavour in the hopes of a little action. Nearly all these men were young, in their twenties and thirties – still fire-eaters.

Eventually a compromise was hashed out. The Earl Marishal would retain command of the "fleet", while Tullibardine took command of the army. The question then became what to do next. The Clans were cautious about committing themselves before seeing a demonstration of intent, and Tullibardine's muster rolls remained blank. The Lowland lairds were demanding a repeal of the Act of Union[8] and solid evidence of Continental support before they would rise. The farce of the '15 was still too fresh in everyone's mind and three hundred and seven Dons did not constitute "solid support".

Throughout April and May, the Jacobites lay low, while various members went off to recruit their own clansmen. Lord George Murray was one of the last to return, bringing only 20 Athollmen and a party of 40 MacGregors under the adventurous outlaw, Rob Roy. To stiffen everyone's resolve, on April 30th, Keith, as fleet commander, had sent the Spanish ships away. (Though it may have been that the Spanish captains pressed to be released from service in such dangerous waters). Five days later, news came from Edinburgh of the wreck of the Spanish Armada the month before.[9]

[The Duke of Atholl, of whom all these Murray's were sons, was entitled by law to a private army of 6,000 men. It appears the Dukes are still so entitled.]

On the heels of the Spanish frigates' departure came five English frigates under one Captain Boyle, with orders to investigate rumours of a clan rising. Putting into the loch (May 11th), three of them (Boyle's flagship *HMS Worcester*, plus *HMS Flamborough* and *HMS Enterprise*) drew up close under Eilean Donan and bombarded it for several hours. The remaining two patrolled the more open waters to the west (stopping to set fire to a church on the shore of Loch Duich, for no particular reason). A party of sailors then landed, took the Spanish garrison[10] at the castle prisoner and blew up the magazine. Evidently they did not feel strong enough to deal with the main Jacobite army. But in their present position, they had cut the Jacks' escape route. Meanwhile the English were mustering.

Three years after the end of the last rising, Scotland was still heavily garrisoned. Expecting some sort of foreign landing, the Administration had recalled 4 battalions from Ireland and enlisted the services of 3 Dutch battalions, plus 2 Swiss battalions in Dutch pay (the Dutch were obliged to provide these troops as one of the provisions of the Treaty of Utrecht). By March 24th, as the Spanish ships could attest, they had Norris off the Lizard, plus 3 frigates in the Bay of Biscay. Other patrols swept the home waters.

Government Order of Battle

NB. Regiments were not numbered until 1751.

Montague's Regiment of Foot (11th Devonshires) 350 men
Clayton's Regiment of Foot (14th West Yorkshires) 330 men
Harrison's Regiment of Foot (15th East Yorkshires) 313 men
Huffels' & Ameroogens' Dutch (a combined battalion) 10 cys

Strengths given for July; only 850 out of the above present at the battle. Additional forces:

Campbell's Regiment of North British Dragoons
(Scots Greys) 150-180 men
Milburn's Grenadiers 100 men from the line battalions

Loyal (Whig) Highlanders:

Sutherland Clan 100 men
MacKay Clan 56 men
Munro Clan 80 men

Artillery: 4 Coehorns

Elsewhere in Scotland
Carpenter's Regiment of Dragoons 150-180 men
Stair's Regiment of Dragoons 150-180 men
Cholmondeley's Regiment of Foot 342 men
Wightman's Regiment of Foot 350 men
Macartney's Regiment of Foot 340 men

Dutch Forces:
3 battalions, including the detachments at Glenshiel
(the units were stationed in central England, and must have just sent detachments north).
2 Swiss battalions (in Dutch pay) on the Thames

In England

Initial dispositions unknown, but concentrations mainly in the West. The British OB included 7 battalions of foot guards and 41 of line, several troops of horse guards, 8 regiments of horse, and 14 of dragoons. Some of these forces were in various colonial and naval garrison posts; others were on the (separate) Irish establishment. All would have been well under strength.

Reinforcements (some)
4 battalions from Ireland to the West

In Transit 4 battalions of Dutch

On Offer 6 more battalions of Dutch, 18-20 battalions of French (!) plus 10 French squadrons of horse (5 regts)

Preparing for Battle

Cut off, the Jacobites continued to wait for recruits. Seaforth returned with 600 local men, mostly MacKenzies and MacRaes. MacKinnon of Skye dodged the British warships and appeared with his entire fighting force of 50. 150 Camerons, and another 150 MacDougalls, Glengarry MacDonells, and MacLeans swelled the rebel army to some 1,200 men, including the 240-odd remaining Spanish. They still awaited both Clanranald MacDonald and a party of Chisholms, but events were fast overtaking them.

Jacobite Order of Battle

Men of Atholl 20 men

MacGregors 40 men (including Rob Roy)

Seaforth's MacKenzies 600 men (including the MacRaes)

MacKinnon of Skye 50 men

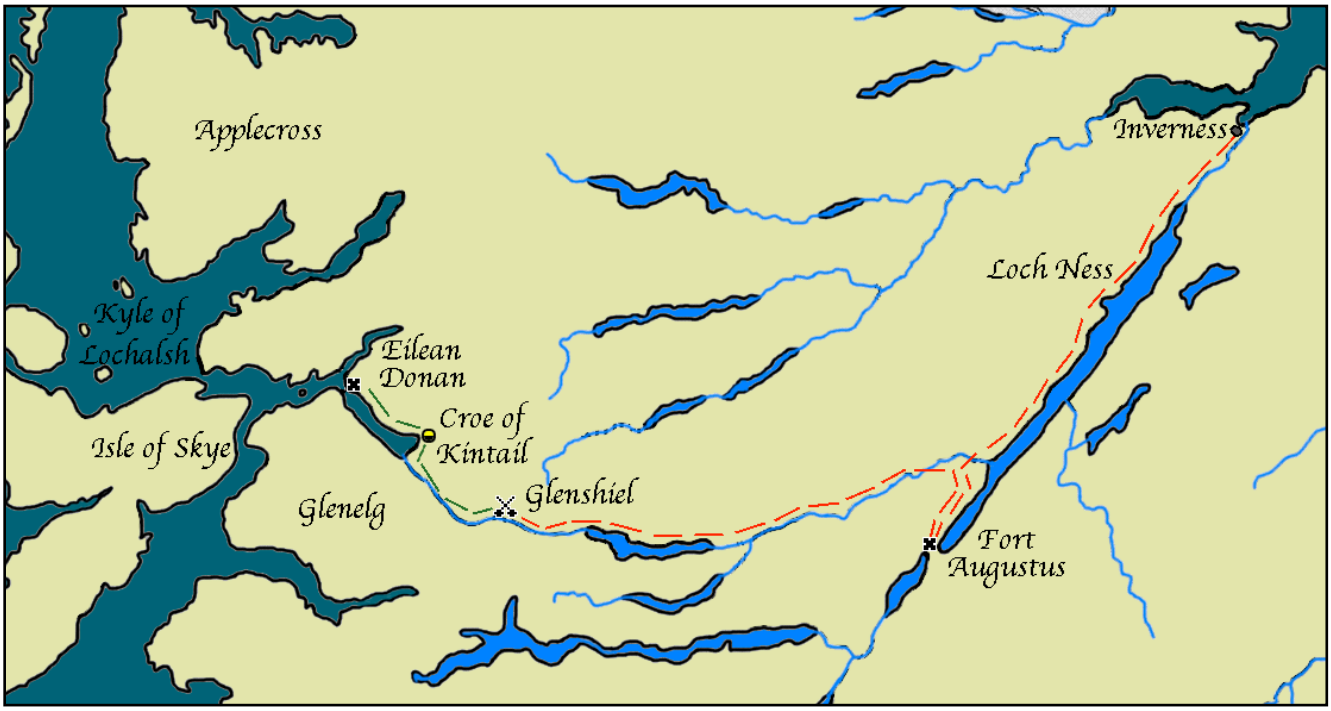
Cameron of Lochiel 150 men

MacDougall Clan, Glengarry MacDonells, MacLean Clan: 150 men in all

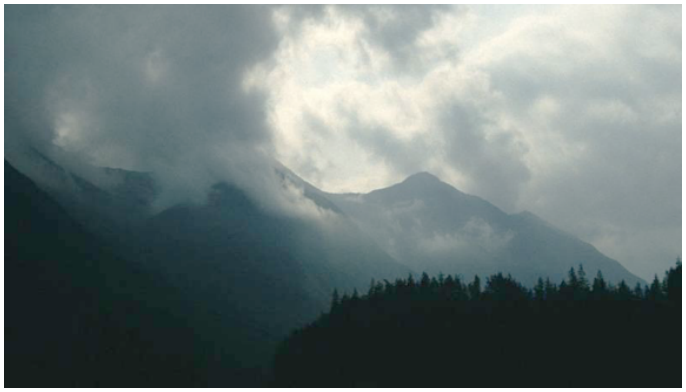
Don Nicolas Bulano's Picquets:
307 Spanish (all ranks, including himself), less 40 POWs

General Wightman, a veteran of Sherriffmuir[11], had been entrusted with the mission of locating and defeating the Jacobites. To accomplish this he scraped together 850 men in 4 battalions of foot, 150 dragoons, and around 130 "loyal" clansmen with personal grudges against Seaforth. These marched from Inverness down the Great Glen[12] to Fort Augustus and thence up Glen Morriston by way of Loch Cluanie to Glen Shiel, camping at the western end of Loch Cluanie, on the 8th of May (still an exceptionally bleak spot to spend a vacation). Here they assembled supplies and prepared for action, while Wightman conducted reconnaissance.

A month later, on June 7th, the Jacobite leaders received word of Wightman's immanent approach from their vedettes. The sources are not clear why Wightman waited a whole month before moving in for the kill, but some common reasons come to mind. There were no roads to speak of, so assembling a force and sufficient supplies took time. There was also the question of the expense and risk of a battle; the Highlanders were not easy pickings, as the General knew well. With the failure of the Armada, perhaps the rebels would decide to quit and make it easy for everyone. Probably Wightman knew some of the leaders; there may have been dialogue between the camps that would have been excerpted from the official histories. In any case, he had the rebels bottled up. Having decided to fight, the Jacks broke camp at Glen Croe on June 9th[13] and marched up Glen Shiel along a cattle road for about 13 kilometers to the narrowest part of the glen, where the road bridged the River Shiel.



The sun blazed down from a cloudless June sky, turning the still waters of the sealoch a brilliant blue. The warm smells of heather and road dust mingled with the rank stench of drying seaweed and the pungent odour of tobacco smoke. A murmur of voices and the shuffling tramp of feet, punctuated by the cries of the seabirds, as the column of men, a thousand or so, four abreast, marched steadily away from their dumped supplies on the flats of the Croe of Kintail, now up, now level, now up again, winding their way by the burbling rush of the Shiel Burn. Eight miles that hot June morning, till the sun was straight overhead and the cries of the gulls turned to the warbling of songbirds and the smell of heather mingled now with that of sunbaked pinecones. Eight miles and a thousand feet up, a slow climb but a steady one, to where an old wooden bridge crossed the raging torrent of the Shiel at the neck of the glen.



The Five Sisters of Kintail, seen from the west. On the left is the mass of the second hill, Sgurr nan Saighead. Behind the cloud is Sgurr Fhuaran (1068m). The knob in the distance is Sgurr na Carnach. Sgurr na Ciste Dubhe is the last peak on its right flank. At this angle, Corrie nan Spainteach would be directly behind Sgurr na Ciste Dubhe. All the peaks are roughly the same height. Sgurr na Ciste Dubhe is marked at 1027 meters – over 3200 feet.

The men toiled on, here one checking his ammunition, there a pair chatting to keep their spirits up, the lilt of the Gaelic blending with the staccato speech of the Highlanders' new allies. A laugh, a challenge, a brace of scouts, stripped to their shirts, dodging nimbly along the flanks of the Five Sisters as they sought for signs of the enemy. There were men of many clans here, all friends for now: even the Wild MacRaes, who the previous night had danced by torchlight on the roof of Eilean Donan.[14] Last of all, slower than the barefoot, kilted hillmen, a string of dusty white coats and battered black tricornes, wigged, moustached, and queued in the French manner, muskets over one shoulder, knapsacks over the other, the two hundred men of Don Bulano's Spanish Picquets.

Don Nicholas Bulano, on the wildest enterprise of his life, seconded from the Galicia Regiment to lead a company composed of files from a dozen regiments, for, by the custom of those days, when on foreign service all must be given an equal chance to win glory. [15]Prominent among them were faces from his own unit, also the blue cuffs of La Corona, matching the sky overhead. Some were raw, some were veterans. The Redcoats were supposed to be better, but the Don had met them at Almanza and was confident his own men would acquit themselves well. But what to make of these Montaneros, so like the Basques of Spain, secretive, uncouth, provincial – yet here a chieftain speaking fluent French, another quoting Seneca in passable Latin. Their lords too, exiles who considered all Europe as their home, arguing strategy as if still seated over dice and wine at some French café. Should they not have worked it all out then, instead of bickering with an enemy close in front of them, and their rear cut off – for the sails of the British frigates could still be seen. He prayed to Saint James for protection for the handful of men left guarding the camp.

Argue, argue, argue… argue on the voyage out, argue round the campfires waiting for recruits that did not come, argue on the march – would these men never agree? There was one, Milord George… So opinionated, yet even Don Bulano's youngest corporal had seen more service. And his relation, de Tolley… He obviously saw himself as El Hombre, though the Don knew George Keith and knew him to be the better soldier. De Tolley wanted to be in charge but did not want the responsibility. Why did he always agree with that Glendorel man… a Cambul. Were not the Cambuls heretics? Don Bulano had heard their chief had been one of Marlboro's generals and was now a politician in England. Oh, bueno, ¿qué importa? He, Don Nicholas Bulano of the Galicia Regiment, had been desired by His Most Catholic Majesty to uphold the honour of Spanish arms in this ultima thule. This he and his men would do. Perhaps when he returned to Spain… CRACK… a shot. Now several more. Good, at least there will be action. And for all the contention, the señors have at least picked the best place in the valley to make a stand.

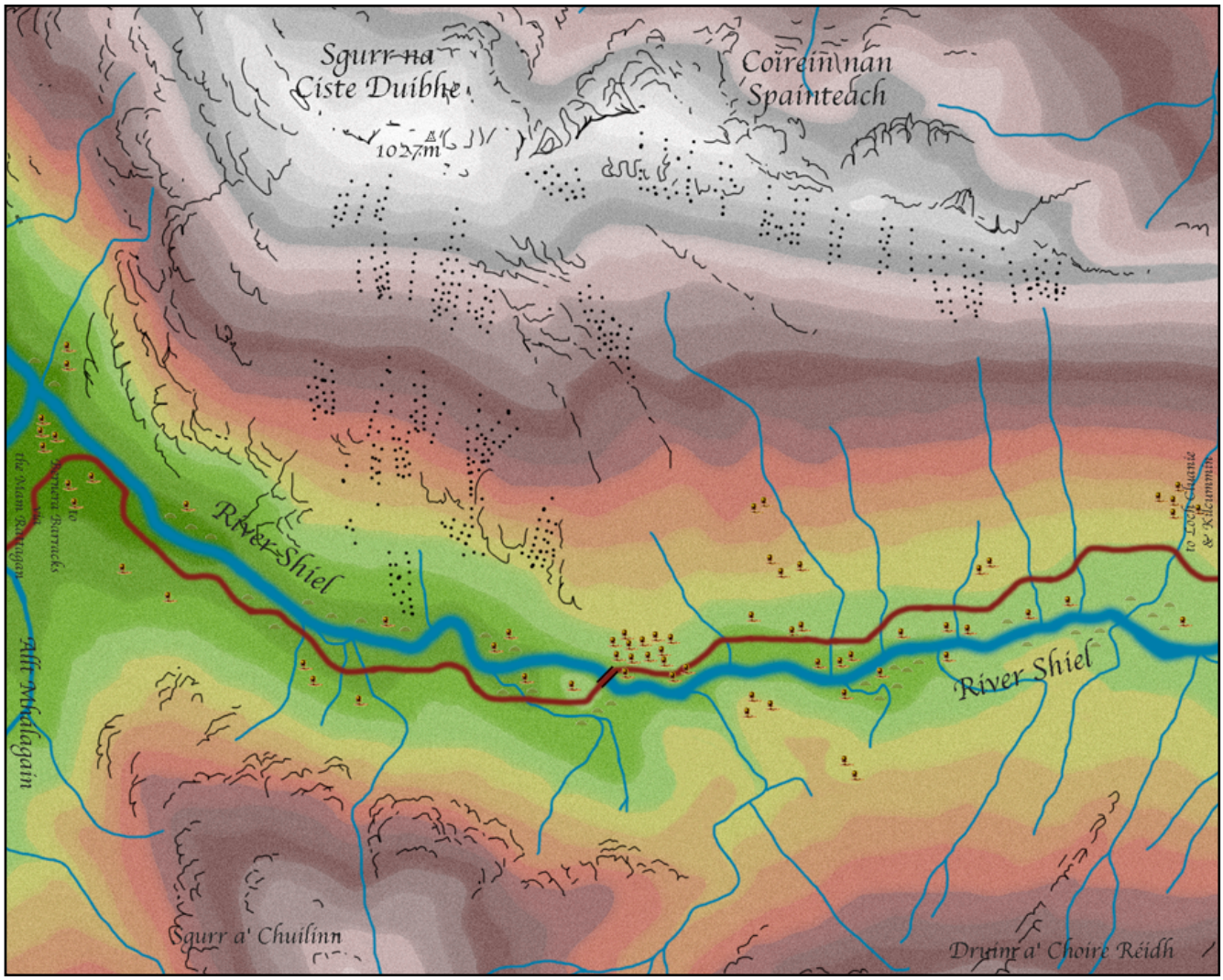
Details of the march are scarce, but it cannot have taken more than three or four hours at most, even allowing for the slower pace of the Spaniards. Assuming they broke camp in early to mid-morning, this still left them several hours to construct field defenses in the pass, which is what they did. A barricade of logs was thrown up, blocking the route to the bridge where the drove road passed among some trees. The works were extensive enough to fully protect the Spanish contingent, who were deployed as the fulcrum of the position.

The bulk of the Highland army took station across the rocky flanks of *Sgurr na Ciste Duibhe*, the Hill of the Black Coffin. This put them in front of and almost at right angles to the Spanish, and some distance above them. The line stretched for almost half a mile, probably around the 300 to 400 meter elevation mark. The Highlanders also put up rough breastworks from the plentiful scree on the hillside. A smaller force, made up of vedettes recalled from patrolling against the Government forces, was stationed across the river, about 300 meters forward of the bridge, on a knoll or spur some hundred meters above the river, and well protected by a steeply cut ravine in front.

Tullibardine, Officer Commanding, placed himself with Don Bulano and his 200 men[16]. Lord George Murray led the southern detachment, comprised of 200 MacKenzies and probably some MacGregors. On the northern slope, the main body of Highlanders was under Seaforth, with his remaining MacKenzies and MacRaes in 2 battalions at the end closest to

the enemy's approach. The Earl Marishal accompanied the left as a volunteer, although in the heat of battle he appears to have taken command of one of the MacKenzie battalions. Next to the MacKenzies came the bulk of the MacGregors under Rob Roy, then the MacDonalds, MacDougalls, MacLeans, MacKinnons, and Camerons, although their precise order of deployment is uncertain. This was the ominous sight that met General Wightman's eyes as his column approached the pass late that afternoon.[17]

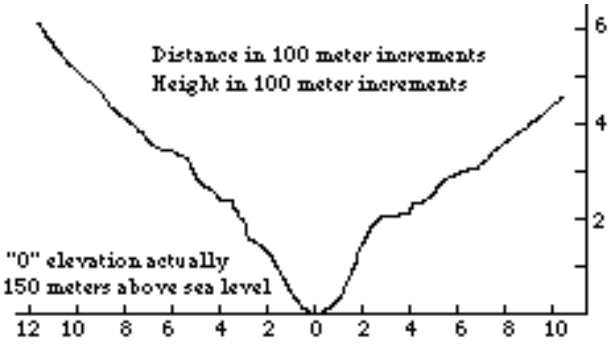
Wightman had also broken camp that morning and begun his descent to the sea, screened at a half-mile interval by Murray's vedettes retreating before him. His army came in sight of the Highlanders about 2pm. Although it was late, Wightman determined on battle immediately, before other clans, known to be on the way, could put in an appearance. Two of his four battalions were also veterans of Sherriffmuir. They had been chased from the field on that occasion. In all, there were 3 battalions of regulars, the 14th West Yorkshires (Clayton's), 15th East Yorkshires (Harrison's), the 11th Devonshires (Montague's), plus a battalion of Dutch, Huffels' & Ameroogens',[18] accompanied by about 100 Sutherland clansmen, 150 men of the Royal Regiment of Dragoons[19], and 4 Coehorn mortars. Wightman deployed Montague's and Huffel's on his right, along with 50 men of Harrison's and 56 of the MacKay Clan, all under command of his senior commander, Colonel Clayton. On the left, crossing the river at a shallow point, were Clayton's Regiment and a party of 80 Munros. The dragoons and the mortars remained on the road.



Map of the area

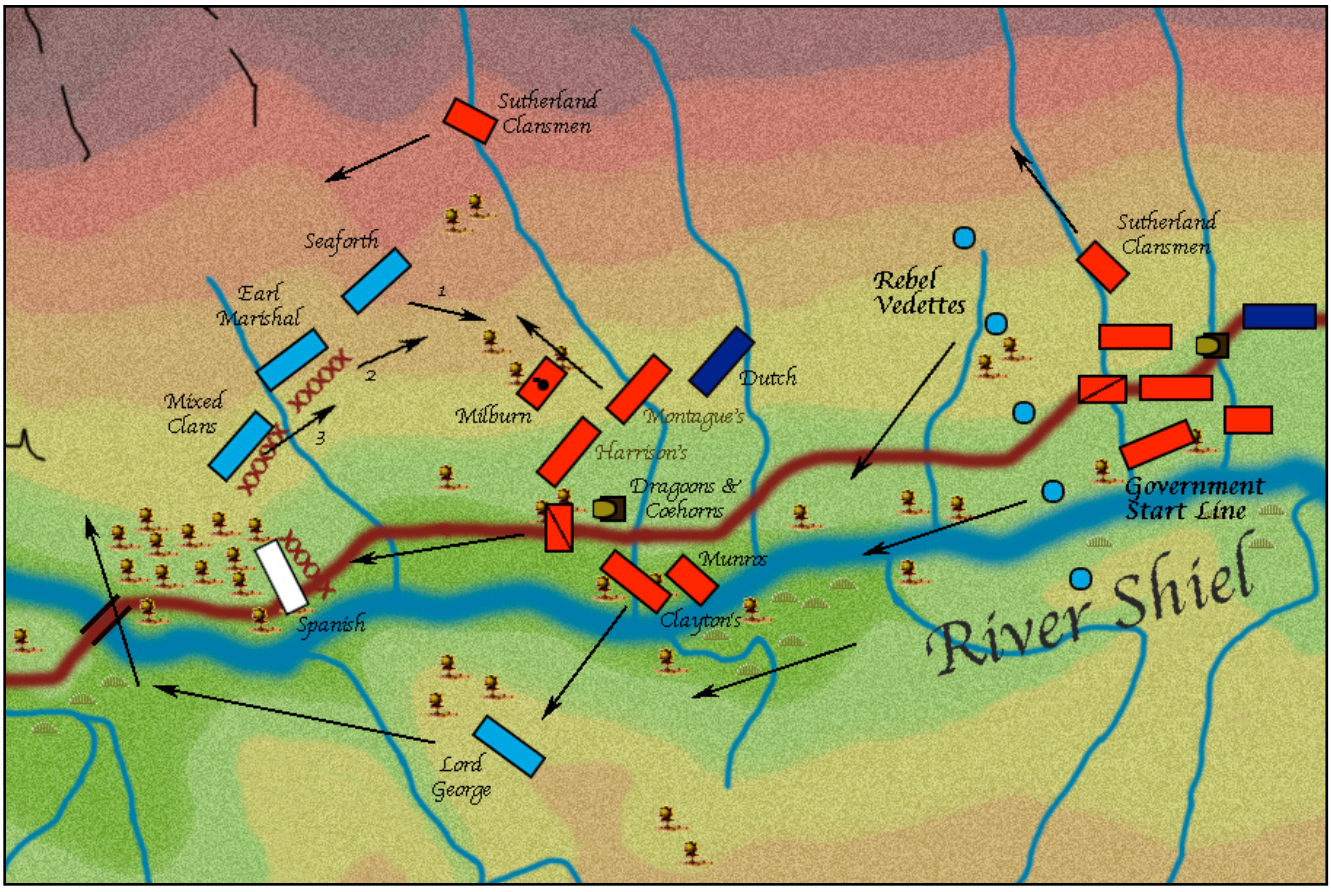
The Battle of Glenshiel

At 5pm, the battle opened. Wightman's first action was to move up his mortars under escort by the dragoons and bombard the Spanish position, while his left probed against the Jacobite right. Climbing the stream's banks proved no easy task, and the government forces were held off for a whole hour. Wightman then shifted his Coehorns to fire upon Lord George Murray and his men. The Highlanders stood the bombardment, although they were somewhat discomfited. With little cover, there were several casualties, including Murray himself, who was taken to the rear with a shell splinter in his leg. Tullibardine was unwilling to reinforce his brother, perhaps because he had no reserves. Eventually the mortars set the tinder-dry heather on fire and both sides quit the knoll, with the Highlanders crossing the river behind the Spaniards to rejoin their comrades up on *Sgurr na Ciste Duibhe*.



Intervisibility Diagram showing relative steepness of slopes at Bridge of Shiel, looking East

Toward the end of this action, Wightman ordered his main assault, led by Clayton against the extreme left of the Jacobite line – Seaforth and his MacKenzies. A hundred-man converged grenadier unit, drawn from the line battalions' grenadier companies and led by a Colonel Milburn, stormed the Highlanders' rude entrenchments and drove the clansmen back, even as the loyalist MacKays appeared out of a fold in the hillside above and behind the rebels. Seaforth, calling for reinforcements, took a musket ball in the arm. His party then began to withdraw uphill, being concerned for the safety of their chief, as the Earl Marishal led the second body of MacKenzies across the slope in a counterattack. The Dutch battalion's platoon volleys repulsed this effort and the men likewise scattered uphill, though they had managed to halt the government advance. Now the other clans, led by the MacGregors, advanced through the smoke and gathering gloom, but were driven off one by one as they came up. By the time Clan Gregor entered the fray it was nearly 8pm and no advantage had been gained on the slopes for either side.



The course of the battle

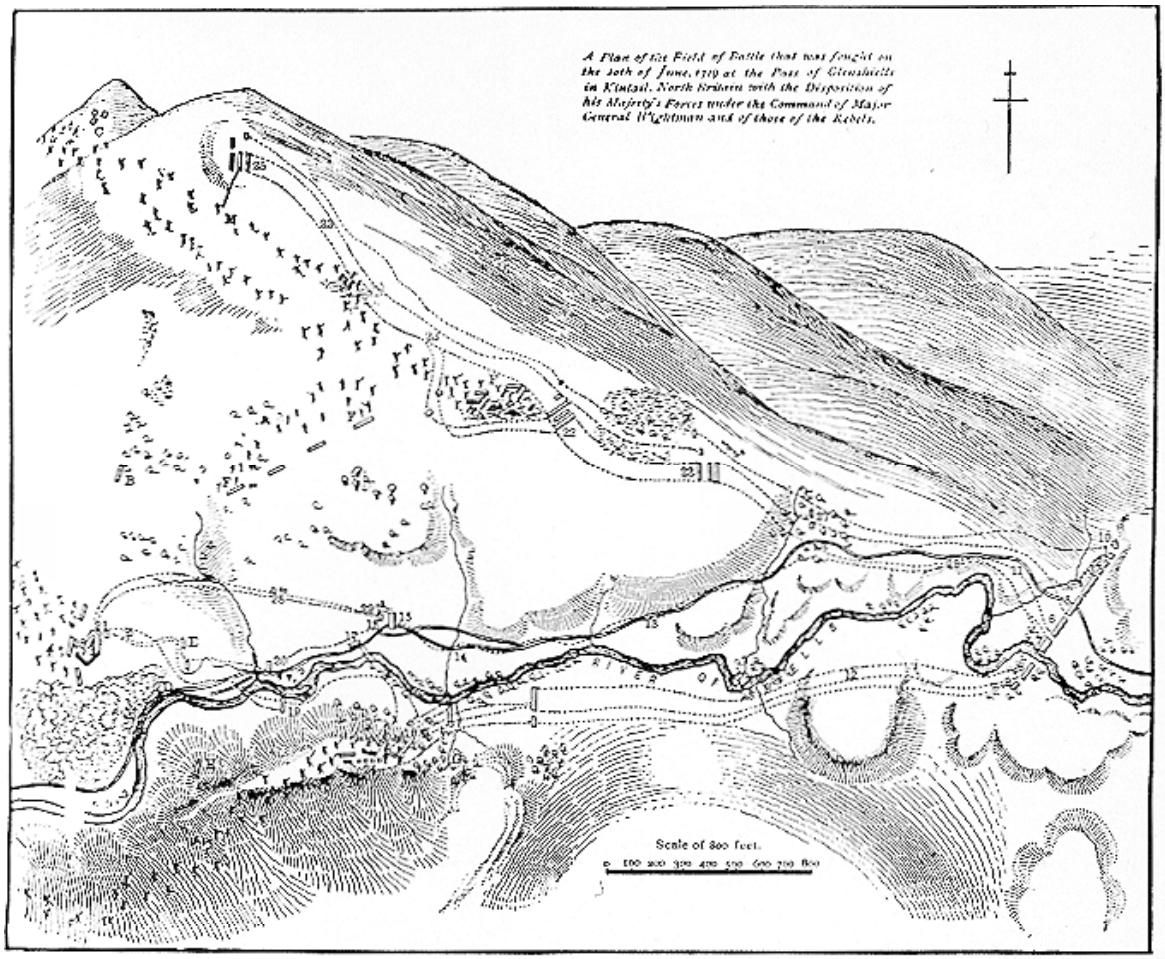
His flanks wide open, Don Bulano watched the Coehorns being trained on his barricade once more, and the Dragoons dismounting for an assault up the road. Gallantly he offered to launch an attack, but was dissuaded. Most of the Highlanders had reformed on the slopes above the English, who, although they could not be dislodged, were too exhausted to climb higher. As the light disappeared, Clayton ordered his troops to rejoin Wightman on the road below. Don Bulano noticed that their route of descent would place them behind his men. Thus when the Dragoons charged the Spanish position on foot, clambering over the breastworks in their clumsy boots and heavy jackets, they found the place empty. The Government troops bivouacked in the shelter of the woods, uncertain what tomorrow might bring. Wightman had 121 wounded and some 21 missing or killed (mostly from Montague's); the Jacobites might be receiving reinforcements even as his troops slept!

A black & white copy of Lionel Edwards' Glenshiel 1719

In the foreground, picquets of the Royal North British Dragoons secure their horses near Wightman's CP, while the main body assaults the Spanish-held roadblock in the far center. Nearby, a couple of dejected Spanish prisoners sit under guard. Note the cumbersome boots of the dragoons. Hidden behind the horses, the Coehorns are firing, as can be seen by the contrails. On the left, Montague's men are attempting to clear the knoll on the south bank of the Shiel; the smoke is from heather set on fire by the mortars. On the right hand slopes, the Highlanders are being methodically driven off, although the defending Government troops are out of the picture. Meanwhile, Spanish troops and more Highlanders beat a hasty retreat in the distance as their positions are overrun. In actuality, the Highlanders, under Rob Roy, were crossing behind their own lines to join the fight, while the assault on the Spanish did not occur until after both flanks had been staved in, and the dragoons entered an empty position. In fact, the three actions shown here were not simultaneous, but sequential: left, right, and center. However condensed, the picture manages to convey a good overall impression of the battle.

Glenshiel Battlefield: Author's Photographs

Taken in 2008, these photos show the battlefield from the valley floor. The author at first believed the old paintings depicting this scenery to have been exaggerated. They are not. In sequence from left to right and top to bottom are:
a) looking toward the Spanish abatis (at the dip in the road or a little beyond), b) looking west at the Government approach route, c) the point where the Government forces crossed the stream, d) the hill where Lord George Murray's men deployed (in the foreground; although cut off in the picture, the front half of the knoll is equally steep), e) looking up *Sgurr na Ciste Duibhe* to the Jacobite lines (the "horizontal" skyline is a 60° slope!), f) a closeup of the Jacobite-held slope (the boulders were part of the defenses).



REFERENCES TO THE PLAN

1. A Sergt. and 12 Grenadiers.
2. An Officer and 24 do.
3. Main Body of Grenadiers, 120 in Num.
4. Col. Montagu's Regmt.
5. Col. Harrison's Detacht Battalion.
6. Huffel's Regmt. and 4 Companies of Amerongen's.
7. Dragoons.
8. Col. Clayton's Regiment.
9. The Monro's Highlanders.
10. The Sutherland's Right.
11. The first march by y^e^ Right.
12. Clayton's march by the Left.
13. The Dragoons march to the Plain.
14. The Dragoons Halt.
15. The Dragoons advance to the middle of the Plain.
16. Clayton's four Plottoons and the Monro's making y^e^ First Attack on y^e^ Rebels' Right.
17. Cohorn Mortars throwing Granades at the Rebels where y^e^ First Attack was Ordered.
18. Cohorn Mortars throwing Granades at y^e^ Spaniards in their Entrenchments.
19. Part of Clayton's attacks the Barricade of the Pass.
20. 35 Dragoons on Foot attack the Spaniards Breast Works.
21. The Dragoons mount the Hill.
22. Our March in line of Battle to the Rock where the Attack began under y^e^ command of Col. Clayton.
23. Our Right pursue the Rebells.
24. The Plottoons and the Monro's halt upon the Hill, having putt the Ennemy to the Flight.
25. Our Right halts upon y^e^ Mountain.
26. Part of Clayton's takes possession of y^e^ Hill that commanded the Pass.
27. Guard for the Baggage and place for the Hospitall.
28. The Bagage advanced with the wounded men for their security.
29. Majr.-Genl. Whightman giving his directions during the Action.

REFERENCES TO THE ENNEMY

A. A Spanish Regiment posted on the Hill that commanded the Plain and the Pass.
B. Spaniards march to y^e^ Mount and Halt.
C. The Spaniards retire to the Top of the mountain.
D. The Barricade that defended the Pass on the River Side.
E. The Breastworks on the Side of the Hill.
F. The Highlanders drawn up before the attack.
G. A straggling number of Highlanders fire upon the Plottoons of Clayton's and the Monro's behind them in the time of the attack.
H. A Body of Highlanders going to sustain their Right.
M. The Flight of the Rebels. The Mount called Skururan the highest in Scotland except Benevis.

A Plan of the Battle of Glenshiel by Lieutenant John Henry Bastide

The End of the Affair

"Gentlemen, our position, is I think, a hopeless one. How are your men, Lord George?"

"Halfway to Dunkeld, my Lord Marishal. But what would you? Their plaids lie on the hillside below us. They have no clothes to keep them from the dawn chill. And they will not face dragoons".

"The tracoons waas a baad surprise, but ta Coehorns wast the difficulty. Aye, dat and ta Dutchies". Old Borlum spat and scratched his beard. "What say you Rob?"

"That it is a baad business, to be sure. She pe not staying 'til dawn is my mind".

A groan from the bed of the corrie. "You always were our Odysseus, Rob".

"How is the arm, my Lord Seaforth?"

"Hurts like damnation, what do you think…augh…careful, you muttonheads". Several brawny MacKenzies pick up their chief's litter. "I am sorry I cannot stay, gentlemen, but my men prefer me alive, it would seem, despite my ill treatment of them".

"Fare you well then, Will… the King shall enjoy his own again". "Aye" "Aye" "See you at the Café Royale, Will".

"Well then, humph… My lord Tullibardine, you still command here. What are your orders?"

"As I said from the beginning, we were sent to provide a diversion for the Dons. We have certainly done that. Is it our fault if they allow the weather to get the better of them? There'll be other opportunities… and better ones."

"I concur. We've made our play for honour's sake. We can do no good here. Chiefs to me, if you please."

The leaders, those that have remained, take their orders. Quietly they gather up their men. "Make for the Stone of Sorrow…" "Any man who shall meet me at the Red Cow next Monday 'een shall have that last of the gold, fair and square…" "Rob, are we for Inversnaid?" "Nae. Ta sodjer roy are thick tat way. Hist! Tere's still a tun o' powder and fair good baccy Glen Croe way…"

Soon, only the command party and the Whitecoats are left.

"Qué está sucediendo mi señor? Why are your montañeros leaving?"

"I am sorry, Don Bulano, but the play has come to an end. We have lost the battlefield and we are too far from our depot to resupply before the dawn. Without His Majesty's army our presence here is pointless anyway. No se preocupe, usted y sus hombres han hecho todo lo que exige el honor, y más. I am sorry that it has come to this, but I do not think they shall treat you harshly. England is at war with Spain, and you are uniformed soldiers; they should accord you the honours of war. Buena suerte, Capitán. Vaya con dios".

Don Bulano sighed inwardly. The idea of surrender did not appeal to him. But neither did starving to death among these trackless hills. They had few supplies, and precious little ammunition. They had no transport, no ship. There was no way they could pass themselves off as locals. The thought of being robbed and beaten by half-naked savages for the sake of his meager purse was a repugnant one. The English officers were heretics, but at least they were civilized. "Vaya con dios, mi señor". Corporal Vargas! Lend me your shirt…"

So Wightman needn't have worried. The Highlanders melted away over the watershed in the night, leaving the Spanish camped out in a corrie on the back side of *Sgurr na Ciste Duibhe*, still known as *Coirein nan Spainteach*. As the Government forces wearily climbed the hill on their morning sweep, they were met by a drummer and white flag. Most of the Highlanders were already heading back to their farms as if nothing had happened, although the farseeing Rob Roy made a detour to destroy the remaining supplies at Glen Croe, with the Munros hot on his tail.[20] The Jacobite leadership quietly reappeared in the Parisian cafés and the returning clansmen told their thankful wives that their "business venture" had not been profitable. Jacobite casualties were very light. The Government forces conducted some lackluster ravaging of MacKenzie's lands and returned to barracks.

The unfortunate Spanish, who had surrendered in hopes of repatriation, or at least a decent meal, spent some months wilting in the Inverness Gaol[21] while the authorities attempted to make them pay for their passage home. Penniless, they were supported by Brigadier Preston, the prison governor, on his own credit.[22] Eventually, they were repatriated, but Don Bulano was retained as hostage for their debts (the authorities sent the Spanish an I.O.U.), while Preston set about the thankless task of trying to get compensation from the Government before his creditors ruined him.

By 1720, the war was over. Cardinal Alberoni had fallen from favour with a mighty crash. By 1721, Spain had a treaty with both France and Britain; the Jacobites, by now much discredited, would have to look elsewhere for support. As for the main players, a gouty Tullibardine lived to unfurl the Standard at Glenfinnan with Bonnie Prince Charlie, Lord George became Charlie's Lieutenant General, to dubious effect, while Ormonde retired to Spain on a meager pension and amused himself by conducting various plots and intrigues. The Keith brothers went on to find fame in Russian and Prussian service; the Earl Marishal becoming ambassador to France and Spain, and later governor of Neufchatel, while his brother fought Tatars, Turks, and Swedes for Russia and wound up serving Frederick the Great as *Feldmarshal* Keith, dying at the battle of Hochkirch in 1758.

Afterthoughts

Strategically, the Battle of Glenshiel made no sense. It was fought because honour demanded that a blow should be struck. The Jacobite Cause would have suffered if the participants had simply disbanded and gone quietly home. It is likely, too, that the clansmen were the ones who clamoured most for action. After having spent weeks getting to the muster, they wanted an Event. Besides, what would the professionals have thought of their prowess if they had simply crept away?

Partly, the rebels were victims of bad planning and bad timing. The Earl Marishal sent his ships away before he learned of the Armada's failure, because he felt he had to boost morale. Then the Royal Navy blocked the harbour. Because the effort was a diversion, no real attempt had been made to coordinate with the local Jacobites, who were not prepared to "come out". A successful insurrection would have taken months to plan – assuming the people involved had all remained totally committed to the task the whole time. There were no GPS devices and cell phones in those days; no instantaneous coordination. The most momentous decisions were made on a wing and a prayer. This time, it didn't work. When Bonnie Prince Charlie landed in 1745, with as little preparation, it almost did.

Regarding the battle itself, the position was excellent, a classic L-ambush. Except that the Highlanders did not fight that way. Ideally, they would have massed for a charge down a somewhat gentler slope and either broken clean through the enemy or been defeated in the first rush. They conducted a skirmish instead. Almost certainly it was the steepness of the ground that forced them to do so. Several small charges were conducted along the slope (very hard on the legs, charging sideways on a slope) but they were uncoordinated and only served to slow the Government forces down. Most likely, it was limited visibility that prevented an organized counterattack. Eventually, a stalemate ensued, but since the loyalists held the battlefield they controlled the road down to the Jacobite supply dump. They also prevented the clansmen from recovering their clothes. Part of the reason that Highlanders were a one shot weapon is that they "cast their plaids" when charging, and fought only in their shirts. If they didn't win, they had no coat and no bedroll. They also didn't get a chance to do any plundering. So after a defeat they typically went home, with or without orders.

Little is said about the conduct of the Spanish in English sources. Don Bulano's offer to charge is recorded, suggesting that their morale was high; they also withstood a lengthy bombardment. As Regulars, they were placed as the anchor of the position, and they held on until it was obvious they were unsupported and outflanked. But once the battle was over, they were in a cleft stick. They could not hop on a boat and leave; they could not melt into the hills. Probably they were low on supplies. If they had split up to do "escape and evasion", the local clansmen would have been a bigger threat than the English dragoons. Since Spain and England were at war, it was natural that Don Bulano surrender. No shame accrued to such an act. Indeed, the *La Corona* Regiment holds a battle honour for Glenshiel. In the culture of the times, Bulano and his men could expect to be reasonably well treated and to be exchanged at the first opportunity. It is a measure of the inbred British fear of "Popery" and "the Dons" that his men's treatment was harsher than it should have been.

A Comparison of Forces

The Battle of Glenshiel involved two very different types of warrior – both fighting on each side. First, there were the professionals, Spanish and British (plus the very similar Dutch). And then there were the Highlanders.

The Regulars were equipped and organized along similar lines, and fought in essentially the same way. The dress of the period consisted of a tricorne hat (a wide-brimmed peasant "floppy hat" turned up on three sides), trimmed with lace, with a cockade to indicate who they were – red was Spain's colour; the British and Dutch used black. Long woolen overcoats were worn, usually with a coloured lining that could be seen when the cuffs were turned back (up to the elbow in this period). The men wore heavy, knee length woolen coats; white (undyed) for the Spanish, blue for the Dutch, and red for the British. Under the coat was a waistcoat, sometimes made from old overcoats, sometimes not. Breeches were tight, and were (usually) either the same colour as the greatcoat or as the waistcoat. Stockings were long, usually white or grey, and covered up by knee length black or brown gaiters. Foot soldiers wore buckled shoes, not boots. In order to build *esprit de corps*, and since the regiments were all owned by aristocratic "proprietor-colonels", a wide variety of minor alterations were made to the uniforms: extra lace or buttons, tassels, collars, and the like.

In addition to a knapsack for food and personal possessions, and a water bottle, the men wore cartridge pouches on a waist belt, usually holding a dozen or less rounds (the ammunition and the firing charge being separate in those days). Quite often a "hanger", or short sword, was hung together with a bayonet, on the left hip. The troops' primary weapon was a muzzle-loading musket firing 10-, 12-, or 16-gauge lead balls. A few armies still had units sporting pikes (generally in the militia), and officers and NCOs often carried "spontoons", or half-pikes; officers naturally carried swords as badges of rank. They also had more elaborate uniforms.

Because of the nature of their weaponry, soldiers fought in tight lines, four ranks deep, and fired by volley at close range (as close as 30 paces for the British), for maximum effect. There were a number of techniques, but the most usual one for the British and Dutch was volley by platoon, which involved a staggered firing by the first three ranks, platoon by platoon, up and down the line. The staggering ensured that no part of the line was left without the ability to fire. The fourth rank was use as a reserve. In contrast, the French and Spanish fired by whole ranks, which meant a series of slow "heavy blows". In practice, this method was less effective.

Used as a reserve were the grenadier platoons. Each regiment normally had a company of these men, the best in the unit, equipped with satchels of grenades in addition to their muskets. They were used for local counterattacks, to stiffen the line, or could be combined into battalion-size units for major assaults. Naturally there were perquisites that went with such a dangerous job, like better pay. In the absence of "light" troops (not available in quantity until late in the 18th Century), grenadiers were also used as skirmishers.

Glenshiel was an infantry battle, but the British did have a battery of Coehorn mortars and the Royal Regiment of North British Dragoons – the famous Scots Greys. Invented by a Dutchman of the same name, Coehorns came in various sizes, but all looked something like a keg of beer bolted at a 45° angle to a block of wood. Using slats fitted into or under the block, the 80-odd pound "man-portable" version could be carried by four men with relative ease. Calibre of the mortars used at Glenshiel was 4.25in. Range was adjusted by changing the weight of the firing charge, not the angle of fire. Being a mortar, it fired shell, not shot; the fuse to the shell took the form of a wick, lit prior to firing. The pieces were manned by soldiers detached from the infantry, and commanded by an artillery officer (the Royal Artillery had been founded in 1716, in large part because the Rising of '15 demonstrated that civilian amateurs had better become a thing of the past).

The Scots Greys were one of the oldest regiments in the British Army, being raised by James II as a collection of independent cavalry troops to police the Scottish countryside and hunt down the ancestors of the Liberal Party. Like most dragoon regiments, they were dressed like the infantry, except for the wearing of "light" cavalry boots. They were equipped with carbines instead of muskets, and carried a heavy, straight sword. In this period, dragoons still sometimes dismounted to fight, but the practice was soon to be discontinued in most armies; even at this early date, they preferred to charge with the sword.

HYMN To the Victory in SCOTLAND

I sing the Praise of Heros brave
Whose Warlike Merit Conquest gave,
And scorn'd to trample on a Foe,
But beat them first, then let them go:
after a Battle sharp and bloody,
Beyond the reach of Humane Study,
Obtain'd between strong Rocks & Trenches,
By dint of Sword, and vast expences,
'Gainst sturdy Scots, and Spaniards proud,
A Victory most Men allow'd.
Where aft their Foes were quite confounded
While Cannons roard and Trumpets founded.
Beat here & there & God knows whither,
Loll in a Fog, in Sun-shine Weather:
Confusion every where proclaim'd
Such wonders which can ne'er be nam'd.
Abundance slain, which some call dead,
Who in the fright rose up and fled
More stranger yet if News be right,
The fray did last from five till Night,
And those who brought the Tidings hither,
Say Dead and Living fled together.
Nay perfect Miracles abounded,
The dead Men rise and kill'd the wounded
Yet when the Battle it was done,
There was nor found so much as one
Nor none can tell which way they'r gane.
No Antient History can declare,
Such Actions in the Feats-of War,
Great Wills, and Carpenter at Precision,
Might here have learnt a milder Lesson:
For tho' the Victory was compleat,
Both Dead and Living safe retreat.

Here was no tricking feigned Pardon
Which Consequences seldom heard on:
Deluding Men and when that's done;
Hang, Gaol, and Banish every one.
When in this fierce and bloody Fray,
Our Foes had leave to march away:
Without the loss of Man or Gun,
Such generous Favours seldom done,
Such Mercy in this Fight was shown,
We sav'd Men's Lives and lost our own,
A Victory which no Age can show
To let both Dead and Living go:
Yet notwithstanding Highland Clans,
Thcse mighty Favours still withstands,
Reflecting with their bold Bravadoes,
Our Men shott only at their Shadows.
And give us Reasons very pat,
Because they sav'd their Lives by that:
Yet if Reports has not bely'd 'em,
As Bullets came, they skip'd beside em,
which is a Riddle hard and dark.
When not one Gunner hits a Mark;
I doubt they've learn'd the Magick Art,
And value not our Guns a Fart,
Or else the Skins of Highland Scots,
Are Proof against both Swords and,Shots.
Tho' this is strange, it seems too true,
Because none of their Men were flew,
And which our Reason most has shaken,
Not one poor single Rebel taken:
Three Hours beaten and none die,
Yet no Man knows the Reason why,
Tis very strange 'tween You and I.

At this time, British infantry regiments were almost all composed of a single battalion of 10 companies – 9 fusilier and 1 grenadier – with a paper strength of 780 men. Exceptions included the Guards (whose battalions were much stronger as well) and the 1st of Foot (Royal Scots). British dragoon regiments consisted of 3 squadrons of 2 troops each, with a strength of 300 men. In contrast, most Spanish infantry regiments were of 2 battalions, one of 10 companies and one of 9, totaling (on paper) 566 and 524 men, respectively. Earlier, a 12 fusilier and 1 grenadier format had been used; it is unclear, but very likely, that the additional company of the new 1st battalion was of grenadiers. Dutch regiments were approximately the same strength as the British, and usually of a single battalion. The Dutch unit at Glenshiel was a composite, possibly because the battalions were under strength (a chronic state of affairs in all three armies), or because the remaining companies were needed as garrisons in England.

The Highlanders

Glenshiel saw Highland warriors fighting on both sides. This was not uncommon during the Jacobite Wars, since many of the Clans had thrown in their lot with the Government. In this case, the Munros and MacKays were part of a bloc of Whig Clans from the far north who had longstanding grudges against their neighbours, Lord Seaforth's MacKenzies. While the chiefs were motivated by family rivalries, politics, and self-interest, the lowly clansmen were more interested in paying off old scores, winning booty, and having a rousing good fight. Most of the warriors would have been *buannanach* – the idle men of the clan who hung out at the chief's residence waiting on orders to go steal cattle or carry out a "hit' on a rival clan. If a large levy was required, such as occurred during the '15 and the '45, many of the men would have been coerced – their chiefs having the power of life and death over them – but in this small affair they were most likely volunteers.

The name "Highlander" conjures up a hulking or gnarled figure, bearded and raggedly dressed, festooned with weapons of every description. Traditionally, the wealthy were armed with musket, two or three pistols, broadsword and dirk (dagger), and of course a *sgean dubh*. The general levy would be armed with claymores (ancient two-handed swords or newer broadswords), lochaber axes (a polearm), spears, scythes and other farm implements. Wooden targets (shields) were also common.

The Highlanders were not averse to acquiring the latest technology. Arms smuggling was common, and French (and in this case, Spanish) muskets of .69 calibre (12-gauge) were prized. The regulation British musket of .75 calibre (10-gauge) was also "in service", since many of the Highlanders were veterans of Marlborough's wars, just like their opponents. The officers too, the subchiefs or "tacksmen", had often served with foreign armies and new all the latest techniques. However, hill tribe warbands were still at a disadvantage against disciplined regulars, which is why the Spanish were so welcome.

The Highlanders excelled at ambush and raid, and would have made an excellent guerrilla force in those respects, but they lacked the commitment to a higher ideal and the willingness to submit to authority that could have kept them in the field like modern insurgents. Their commanders understood their limitations, and never expected them to commit to a long campaign without the backing of regulars.

Battle tactics for the Clans were simple: find a patch of rough ground (the Highlanders had an unwarranted fear of cavalry), preferably above the enemy, then advance enmasse, stop and fire a volley, and then charge. These tactics were apparently introduced by the Irish Confederates of the Civil War period, a body of whom fought in Scotland under the Marquis of Montrose in 1645. It was an attempt – and an often-successful one – to counter the superior firepower of well-armed troops. Frequently, the men would throw themselves flat while the enemy fired, then complete their rush before their opponents could reload. The assault was almost in the manner of the later French Revolutionary armies; indeed it would have to be in order for the relatively untrained masses to stand a chance against repeated volley fire. Significantly, those units that stood up to the charge were generally bypassed.

The Spanish

The Spanish Army of this period was a new creation, since Felipe V took over an essentially defunct system based on the 17th Century *tercios*. Felipe's French technical advisors introduced French methods, which were unpopular at first, but effective. By raising many new regiments of the classic *ancien régime* pattern and amalgamating the old *tercios* (still over-armed with pikes), he was able to build an army that could weather the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1713), if not with ease, at least with honour. These veterans were available for the War of the Quadruple Alliance (1718-20), but, like the British, the Spanish regiments were at cadre strength after the general demobilizations of 1714 and had to be fleshed out with recruits.

A direct comparison of the Spanish and British is difficult. At Glenshiel, the Spanish and the British infantry never came to grips, but even though the Spanish Regulars were far better soldiers at this time than during the later part of the century – easily equivalent to the French whom they copied – it is likely that the British, with their single-minded emphasis on firing drills, would have come out ahead. Unable, for various reasons, to train at the brigade or higher level, British regiments spent all their time on the firing range, and it paid off; there wasn't an army in Europe that wanted to be on the receiving end of a British volley. And at the scale of Glenshiel, higher unit tactics were irrelevant.

There is a no clear agreement on which Spanish unit or units fought at Glenshiel. One source based on British Intelligence reports states that it was elements of *Don Pedro de Castro's* Regiment of Foot: 12 men drawn from 24 companies to make 6 complete companies. Since the detachment commander, Don Nicolas Bulano, was from the *Galicia* Regiment (Nr. 4) this suggests that *Pedro de Castro*'s later became the *Galicia* Regiment (when regional titles were substituted). But the *Galicia* Regiment's facing colours were red, and *de Castro*'s were yellow. To complicate matters, it is the *Corona* Regiment (Nr. 3) that holds the battle honour (yes, there is one) – and specifically, the 2nd Battalion. Apart from the battle honour, strong evidence for *La Corona* lies in the "blue coats" they are reported to have worn; Spanish troops wore white greatcoats, but often had waistcoats in their regimental "facing" colour. This was the case here; their trousers were also coloured blue. Felipe's new model army was trained by the French, who had a custom of fighting in their waistcoats (regarded as a sloppy habit by their enemies). Plus it was unusually hot that June. *De Castro*'s yellow facings in fact point to it being either the future *Extremadura* (Nr. 26) or *Almanza* (Nr. 40). The best two solutions seem to be either that *La Corona* provided the detachment, with Don Bulano, as a spare officer floating about HQ, or perhaps in the Duke of Ormonde's suite in company with the Keith brothers, was seconded to it; or, that the unit was comprised of detachments from several regiments, which was also common practice, especially on overseas deployments.

Mention of "24 companies" (assuming the information about *De Castro* is at least partly correct) implies that the regiment was still organized along the older 12 fusilier/1 grenadier company per battalion format, but it could be (per the second option) that the "24 companies" are not from one regiment after all. 307 men is not a large number, and if the men were from more than one unit, it is possible *La Corona* and *Galicia*, and perhaps some from *de Castro*, made up the bulk of the detachment.

The Armada (the term is nothing special, it simply means "fleet"") was transporting 10 field cannon, 4,000 Foot, 1,000 Horse (but 300 horses), 15,000 stands of arms, 1,000 barrels of powder, and 2 months pay. A primary source for unit names is Ormonde's correspondence, now part of the Stuart Papers collection at Windsor. The naval component included 5 men of war (1x 64gun, 2x 50gun, 1x 20gun, & 1 small vessel) plus 22 transports capable of holding 10-15 companies of men each (less for the horsemen). British Intelligence put the numbers at 8 warships (including a 60-gun flagship) and 20 transports, with 13 battalions of foot and a regiment of dragoons (900 men – Continental dragoon regiments tended to be large, like their infantry battalion counterparts). Some of the foot battalions came from Spain's Irish Brigade (this could mean that up to 6 battalions were Irish). Also recorded is the *de Liria Regiment* and 4 companies of grenadiers. Reputedly, all were in sad shape, but that report may have come *after* the gale.

If the endeavour had succeeded, it was expected by the British that the enemy would try to land at Liverpool, capture Chester, and march on Bristol. In doing so they would sew up both major western seaports and the vital armament and clothing industries of the Severn Valley (just as the Royalists tried to do in the Civil War). The Spanish, however, apparently intended to simply land at Bristol – in other words, do the same thing in reverse. London, as always, would be the final prize.

Bibliography

Barthorp, Michael, & Embleton, G.A. The Jacobite Rebellions 1689-1745. Osprey Men-at-Arms Series #118. Reed Consumer Books Ltd. London, 1997.

Cassel's Illustrated History of England. Vol 4. Cassel, Petter, and Galpin. London, 1873.

Cruickshank, Eveline, Ed. Ideology and Conspiracy - Aspects of Jacobitism 1689-1759. John Donald Publishers Ltd. Edinburgh, 1982.

Fritz, Paul S. The English Ministers & Jacobitism between the Rebellions of 1715 and 1745. University of Toronto Press, 1975.

Howlett, Hamilton. Highland Constable - The Life and Times of Rob Roy MacGregor. William Blackwood & Sons Ltd. Edinburgh and London, 1950.

Jones, George Hilton. The Mainstream of Jacobitism. Harvard University Press. Cambridge Mass., 1954.

Kemp, Hillary. The Jacobite Rebellion. Almark Publishing Co. Ltd. London, 1975.

McLynn, F. J. The Jacobites. Routledge & Kegan Paul. London, 1985.

Murray, W. H. The Companion Guide to the West Highlands of Scotland. Collins, London, 1977.

Lenman, Bruce. The Jacobite Risings in Britain 1689-1746. Eyre Methuan Ltd. London, 1980.

Publications of the Scottish History Society, Vol. XIX. The Jacobite Attempt of 1719. Collected letters of the Duke of Ormonde. Ed. William Kirk Dickson. Edinburgh, 1895.

Smurthwaite, David. The Ordnance Survey Complete Guide to the Battlefields of Britain. Webb & Bower Ltd, Exeter, Devon, 1984.

Whyte, Ian and Kathleen. On the Trail of the Jacobites. Routledge, London, 1990.

Poem written in 1719. Author unknown. Printed by R.Thomas behind the Royal Exchange, London

Portraits are stock images.

Photographs courtesy of the author.

Footnotes

[1]Like all good Englishmen we shall ignore Ireland. There were several forays there in Elisabeth I's time.

[2]An ancestor of the famous General Byng who commanded the Canadian Corps at Vimy Ridge in 1917. The Byng family were usually naval officers. Another famous descendant was the Admiral Byng who inspired Voltaire's comment "*pour les encouragement des autres*", when he was executed for failing to save the naval base at Minorca in 1757.

[3]The cypher for James in this correspondence was "289" - the use of cyphers rather than the usual code names perhaps points to more professional methodology on the part of the Spanish.

[4]Some sources say 27 ships.

[5]Note: dates are often confusing, because the English calendar was several days out of sync with the Continental calendar. I have used Continental dates up to the arrival in the British theater, and English dates thereafter, in accordance with my sources.

[6]English style is now used for dates.

[7]Near the seaward end of Glen Croe (not to be confused with Glen Coe of massacre fame, which is much further south). Some sources say the ammo dump was *in* the church.

[8] The political union of Scotland and England, imposed by a bribed vote in 1707. Incidentally, the Stuarts were not interested in ruling Scotland alone, so for them, repealing the Union made no sense; in fact, the Union had been their idea in the first place.

[9]Some accounts state that Tullibardine heard first of the Spanish wreck and wanted to leave, and that Marishal sent the ships away then. To retreat without a show would perhaps have been more fatal to the Cause than to fight and lose.

[10]Captain Boyle's log records, "In the castle we found an Irishman, a captain, a Spanish lieutenant, a serjeant, one Scotch rebel and 39 Spanish soldiers, 343 barrels of powder and 52 barrels of musquet shot. We likewise burnt several barns etc where they had a quantity of corn for the use of their camp."

[11]The decisive battle of the 1715 rebellion.

[12]It is not clear whether they marched on the west or east side of the loch. Wade's road, built later, ran on the east side, but required some blasting to run it through. The modern road is on the west side. If coming down the east side, they would have had to double back to get to Glen Morriston.

[13]Some accounts say the 10th, James Edward Stuart's birthday. He was 31.

[14] The next time you attend a military tattoo that includes the bagpipes (the only kind worth attending), and the men dance the Sword Dance under the spotlight, watch the shadows and remember Glenshiel.

[15] The composition of the Spanish detachment is debatable. *La Corona* holds the battle honour, and the sources state that the 2nd battalion, or a portion of it was used, but Don Bulano was from the Galicia Regiment. I suspect that they followed the usual practice of the period and sent a "picquet" composed of troops from several regiments. This ensured that an entire unit would not be destroyed if the ships sank. That would have been a financial disaster for the colonel who owned it.

[16]The missing 40 men were detailed to guard the supply dump.

[17]There is a report by a local source that Rob Roy had been positioned to ambush the rear of Wightman's advancing column, an action intended to encircle the Government forces, but he is supposed to have been driven off because he attacked too soon. It's possible, but the same account states that Wightman blew up Eilean Donan, when Captain Boyle's log clearly states he had already done so, and that the rebels were trying to meet up with the Earl of Mar, who was still in France.

[18]A combined unit; Hussel's or Huffel's, and 4 companies of Ameroogen's, part of a contingent provided under the Treaty of Utrecht. The regimental names and numbers of the English foot post-date the battle by several decades, but are included as a point of reference. At this time, the Colonel's name was the only means of identification.

[19]Later the Royal North British, and later still the Royal Scots Greys.

[20]Musket balls can still be picked up in the field behind the local minister's house.

[21]Those taken earlier were imprisoned in the Leith Tollbooth – a jail/customshouse at Edinburgh's chief port.

[22]At this time, prisoners had to pay for all but the barest necessities of life. The State did not support the prison system. Rich prisoners did quite well, with good food, drink, and even female companionship, but poor prisoners could die of neglect.