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Author(s): Bruce Seton

Source: *The Scottish Historical Review*, Vol. 25, No. 100 (Jul., 1928), pp. 270-281

Published by: Edinburgh University Press

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25525862>

Accessed: 01/12/2009 04:50

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## Dress of the Jacobite Army

### THE HIGHLAND HABIT

THE subject of the clothing worn by officers and men of the Prince's army is one which bristles with difficulties, and one which is usually approached with an even more marked bias than is shown in dealing with other thorny problems arising out of the '45.

Leaving aside the question of the 'tartan,' opinions even now are acutely divided on the question how far the Prince's army did or did not wear the kilt—using the term in its widest sense as including the old 'belted plaid,' and the later adaptation of it, the 'feile or feileadh beag,' 'philabeg,' or kilt, as we know it.

Nevertheless the modernist has not only destroyed the tartan, to his own complete satisfaction, but has restricted the use of the term kilt to the old belted plaid, and professes to believe that the philabeg was the invention of either an English Quaker contractor employed by Wade in his road-building operations or by another English contractor at Strontian; he has further decided that, in any case, the kilt, in either form, was only worn by what may be called the 'Clan' regiments; and then only by the ranks.

In the first place it appears that, having regard to the speed of its creation and the financial stringency which cramped its every movement and defeated its strategy, the Prince's army, speaking generally, wore no uniform at all.

To this statement there are certain exceptions. It is common knowledge that the Life Guards under Lord Elcho, and perhaps those commanded by Lord Balmerino, had a distinctive uniform; and Baggot's Hussars had a uniform head-dress, a tartan waist-coat, a fur cap, and wore 'limmer boots.' But cavalry has always been a favoured arm sartorially, and was so in the Prince's army. The explanation is, no doubt, that most of the men composing it

were country gentlemen who could afford to pay for the clothing of themselves and their mounted servants. Moreover, the everyday clothing of the men of the day, whether a kilt or 'short clothes,' would have been ill-suited to the carrying out of the duties of a mounted soldier.

Lord John Drummond's regiment, the French Royal Scots, and the Franco-Irish 'picquets' wore their own French uniform, but, for obvious reasons, they cannot properly be regarded as typical of the Jacobite infantry.

Of the remainder, whether they belonged to Clan or Lowland units, it seems probable that, when they joined, they continued to wear their everyday dress, with certain additions which will be mentioned in due course.

The Prisoners' Lists contained in the State Papers are, unfortunately, of little assistance in indicating how the men were clothed, though quite frequent references are to be found to prisoners wearing 'Highland clothes' or the 'Highland habit.' As, however, the compilers of these lists were probably civilian clerks, whose duty it was merely to record formal information regarding the name, age, and regiment of the prisoners, it is not surprising that the sartorial peculiarities of the individual at the time of his capture are not stressed—if indeed they were even noticed.

It is necessary therefore to leave the State Papers and to turn to Jacobite literature generally for contemporary sources of information on this point. Such sources exist; but, as might be expected, they too are of varying degrees of reliability, and are sometimes open to more than one interpretation.

One observer at least, John Home, who, many years afterwards, wrote a history of events in the year 1745, has stated definitely that the Prince's army wore the kilt; and later writers, perhaps with insufficient consideration of the implications of that statement, have regarded it as of general application to the Prince's infantry throughout the campaign. Home, it must be admitted, was in the best possible position to know the truth; he was, indeed, literally, an eye-witness. He was himself enrolled in the University Company of the farcical corps of Edinburgh Volunteers at the time of the capture of that city; and he actually witnessed the arrival of the Prince's army. Later he joined the Glasgow Volunteers and was taken prisoner by the Jacobites at the battle of Falkirk and incarcerated in Doune Castle. His statement in regard to the men's clothing, therefore, must be

treated with more respect than has been given to it by certain writers.

Home, no doubt, described with accuracy what he saw, viz. the West Highland units which formed the bulk of the force which captured Edinburgh and beat Cope at Prestonpans.

Further evidence than that of Home is available.

In 'A plain general and authentic account of the Conduct of the Rebels, during their stay at Derby,' which was published as a broadsheet at Derby and is reproduced in *Historical Papers*,<sup>1</sup> the anonymous author describes the entry of the army into that town. After commenting favourably on the appearance of Elcho's Life Guards, he proceeds to describe the main body :

'A crew of shabby lousy pitiful looking fellows mixed up with old Men and Boys ; dressed in dirty Plaids, and as dirty Shoes, without breeches ; and wore their stockings, made of Plaid, not much above half way up their legs, . . . and with their Plaids thrown over their Shoulders.'

Now the adjutant of Lord Ogilvy's regiment, in the Regimental Orders of 4th December, 1745, states that the main body on that day consisted successively of the Atholl Brigade, Ogilvy's, Duke of Perth's, Roy Stuart's, Glenbucket's, and then the Clan regiments. Had the English writer observed any essential difference in the clothing of the first part of the army it seems likely that he would have mentioned it, having regard to his very accurate description of the appearance of the kilted infantry. In fact, this broadsheet goes some way to confirm the statement by Home that the infantry of the Prince's army at that time wore the kilt or the belted plaid.

The difference between Home's description and that given by the Derby correspondent, however, must be noted. Home was speaking of the original force which entered Edinburgh. These consisted in the main of the following units :

Lochiel's Camerons, who actually captured the city ; the Macdonald units, *i.e.* Clanranald's, Keppoch's, and Glengarry's ; the Stewarts of Appin ; Grants of Glenmoriston and Glenurquhart ; McGregors (Glengyle) ; Duke of Perth's ; McLachlans ; Atholl men under Lord Nairn.

The Derby correspondent described the largely reinforced army which reached Derby on 4th December, 1745. This was by no means identical in composition with the earlier force described by Home, for it contained many new units, drawn from

<sup>1</sup> Allardyce, i. 287.

parts of the country where the kilt was certainly not worn as the usual dress.

He may have fallen into the common error of eye-witnesses of describing the objects to which particular attention was attracted and ignoring others. The kilted soldier would certainly strike him, while the soldier wearing plain clothes like those he wore himself might completely escape his notice; and from the particular impression created by the one he may have drawn a general and inaccurate idea of the whole.

Nevertheless, his statement merits as great consideration as that of Home, and the coincidence of evidence is certainly remarkable.

Another source of information is 'The Depositions at Jacobite Trials at Southwark,' from the papers of Sir John Strange, K.C., who was the prosecuting counsel at the Southwark Trials, published as Section XXX. of *Historical Papers, 1699-1750*, edited by Colonel James Allardyce (New Spalding Club).

They consist of notes, probably by a Clerk of Court, summarising the proceedings and the evidence given in each case; and they deal with the trials of sixty officers, who had been sent to London.

These officers included fifteen of the Manchester Regiment, against each of whom in turn was produced evidence that he wore the white cockade, and a 'plaid sash' or 'plaid waistcoat.' The term plaid here presumably meant that it was made of tartan as we understand it; and it would be interesting to know what tartan they selected, and where it came from.

None of these officers was described as wearing any military uniform, except one who wore a red laced coat dating from the '15. If they did wear a uniform it would probably be of the ordinary infantry pattern then in use.

From the forty-five officers remaining it is possible to exclude the following nine: Life Guards—James Bradshaw, Henry Moir, Robert Moir, William Murray of Taymount; Pitsligo's Horse—Andrew Sprule; Strathallan's Horse (Perthshire Squadron)—James Lindsay.

All these were dressed in cavalry uniform: Chaplain, Rev. George Law, the only reference to whose dress is that he wore a white cockade; John Hamilton, Governor of Carlisle, regarding whose clothes nothing is stated; Sir John Wedderburn, Excise Officer, of whom it is said that he generally wore 'English dress.'

There remain thirty-six officers of the other arms of the service.

The units to which they belonged, and the number in each unit, were as follows: Lord Cromarty's, 5; Duke of Atholl's, 1; Duke of Perth's, 7; Farquharson's (*i.e.* Lord Lewis Gordon's), 2; Glenbucket's, 4; Grant's (*i.e.* Glengarry's), 1; Lochiel's, 1; Lord Ogilvy's, 6; Stonywood's (*i.e.* Lord Lewis Gordon's), 1; Roy Stuart's, 1; Lord John Drummond's, 1; Artillery, 2; Staff, 1; Surgeon, 1; regiment not stated, 1.

In nearly every case the statement is made by one or more of the evidences for the prosecution that the individual concerned 'wore the Highland habit' or 'Highland clothes.' In the case of Lord McLeod it was further stated that his jacket was 'colored with green velvet.'

Of these officers four at least, *viz.* Major McLachlan, Lord McLeod, Colonel Farquharson, and the Prince's Staff Officer, Col. Henry Ker of Graden, would probably be mounted, and would be wearing either trews or riding breeches and long boots.

The important point about the remaining thirty-two prisoners is that the witnesses drew no distinction between officers of Cromarty's, Lochiel's, and the Grants on the one hand, and of Glenbucket's, Ogilvy's, or Roy Stuart's on the other. In other words the Highland-Lowland complex which appears to dominate the ideas of modern writers on the '45 seems not to have existed in the minds of these eye-witnesses, on the accuracy of whose observation lives depended.

It will be observed that the list of regiments given above mentions only two of the units which, even at that time, were generally referred to in Army Orders as 'the Clans' or 'Clan units,' *viz.*, Lochiel's and Glengarry's, which accounted for only two prisoners. If, however, Cromarty's regiment be included the number of 'Clan' officers would rise to seven.

On the other hand it does mention most of the 'Lowland' units—Duke of Atholl's, Lord Lewis Gordon's, Duke of Perth's, Glenbucket's, Stonywood's, Ogilvy's, Roy Stuart's, Lord John Drummond's—which was regarded as technically French, and the Artillery; these, between them, provided twenty-four prisoners.

We are driven, then, by the evidence in a court of law, to admit the fact that twenty-four officers of 'Lowland regiments' generally wore the 'Highland habit.' And, unless it can be shown that this group of prisoners was exceptional and unrepresentative from the sartorial point of view, it is difficult to avoid the inference that wearing the 'Highland habit' was, to say the least

of it, a common practice among officers in the Lowland regiments. No conclusion of this sort, however, could be held to apply, necessarily, to the rank and file of those regiments.

The question at once arises, what was the exact significance of the expression 'Highland habit?'

Unfortunately, exhaustive search of contemporary writings on the '45 offers no quite satisfactory reply to this question. All that can be said is that the expression 'Highland habit' meant a variety of 'orders of dress.'

Speaking generally, it is a matter of common knowledge that the 'Highland habit' of chiefs and of the class that provided officers to the Jacobite army normally consisted of tartan coat, plaid, waistcoat, and tartan trews. To this a sporran is often added. Innumerable examples of this habit can be found in contemporary illustrations of biographies and family histories.

The question is to what extent, in the Lists of Prisoners, in the 'Depositions,' and in Jacobite literature generally, 'Highland habit' was the term also used to signify the old 'belted plaid' and the philabeg or kilt.

There are cases in the Records which are of value from the evidential point of view :

In one of these the 'philabeg,' or kilt, as we know it—as distinct from the 'belted plaid'—is definitely stated to have been worn on one occasion by Lord George Murray.

Describing the passage of the Esk by the Jacobite army after the departure from Carlisle on their way north, Lord George Murray says :

'We were a hundred men abreast . . . the water was big and took most of the men breast high. When I was near cross the river I believe there were two thousand men in the water at once. . . . The pipes began to play so soon as we passed, and the men all danced reels, which in a moment dried them, for they held the tails of their short coats in their hands in passing the river so, when their thighs were dry all was right. I was this day in my philabeg, [*sic*] that is to say without Britches. . . . Nothing encourag'd the men more than seeing their officers dress'd like themselves.'<sup>2</sup>

This at least clears up the matter of the form of Highland habit that Lord George was himself wearing on that particular day.

From other references, too, it is certain that Lord George was in the habit of wearing the kilt. In his own account of the

<sup>2</sup> Atholl Chronicles, iii. 125.

march from Perth to Edinburgh he says: 'nixt day they march'd thro Doun and to the foord of the Frews. Ld. Geo. Murray marching at their head in his kilt.' The kilt here may have been the 'philabeg' or the 'belted plaid.'

Now it is known from the Army Orders dated the 20th December 1745 that, after crossing the Esk, Lord George Murray was to move off, via Ecclefechan and Moffat, with the 'Lowland' units, *i.e.* the Atholl Brigade, Roy Stuart's, Ogilvy's, and Glenbucket's, while the Prince marched direct to Dumfries with the Clan regiments.<sup>3</sup>

As a column commander it is reasonable to suppose that he would have been superintending the somewhat risky operation of getting his own column across a river in spate, and that the men he described were men of that column, and not of the Clans.

His account, however, requires closer examination with reference to two points brought out therein.

He states that: (1) The men held up the tails of their coats to prevent them getting wet. (2) Their thighs got dry 'in a moment' when they danced to the pipes. (3) The men were encouraged 'by seeing their officers dress'd like themselves.'

If a man wearing a kilt—in the sense of a 'feileadh beag'—crosses water he would naturally remove his kilt and tuck up his doublet. His thighs might get wet, but they would rapidly dry in the circumstances narrated. On the other hand, if he were wearing a coat and trews and waded across he would get wet in the same way, but he certainly would not get dry 'in a moment' by dancing. The accidental reference to the wetting of the thighs and to the drying effect of dancing certainly suggests that some of the men at least who were being watched by Lord George were wearing the kilt; and this is finally proved by his statement that the men were encouraged by 'seeing their officers dress'd like themselves.'

Turning again to the Depositions at the trials at Southwark, there are some interesting statements made in the case of Charles Kinloch, of Lord Ogilvy's regiment.

One of the prosecution witnesses said that he was 'always in Highland dress,' and another that he saw him marching with his regiment 'dressed in short Highland clothes.' Here the original difficulty of defining Highland dress is accentuated by the addition of the word 'short.' Without excluding the possibility of

<sup>3</sup> *Journal of Army Historical Research*, Special No., vol. ii. Dec. 1923, Itinerary 32.



its meaning Highland 'short clothes' or trews, the more reasonable explanation seems to be that Charles Kinloch sometimes wore the kilt, in the modern sense.

Some years ago a tartan kilt, with tartan coat, waistcoat, and plaid came into the possession of the Stewart Society. It had belonged to a Stewart of Atholl who came out in the '45 and served in the Atholl Brigade. He was captured but released. This costume is conclusive evidence that, as far as he was concerned, the 'Highland habit' consisted of the short kilt, just as it did in the case of Lord George Murray.

Finally, we find that the term 'Highland clothes' applied to a form of dress which it might be expected would be otherwise described. When Lord Lewis Gordon imposed taxation on the unwilling burgesses of Aberdeen it was expressly stated that 'Highland clothes' or the services of an armed man would be accepted in lieu of money.

In writing, however, on 26th November to Col. James Moir of Stonywood, who was engaged in recruiting men in the county, Lord Lewis defined what he meant by the term: 'I have only to add that you'll advert what men you receive be sufficiently furnished with plaids, short cloaths, hose and shoes, and by all means swards.'<sup>4</sup>

This is clear enough. At the same time it does not follow that the modern critic is correct in holding that it represents the Lowland modification of 'Highland habit' or even that it was adopted by any other unit than Stonywood's. It may well have applied also to Bannerman of Elsick's men, and even to the Strathbogie unit raised by the John Hamilton who became Governor of Carlisle. But there is no reason to conclude that it necessarily applied to Glenbucket's, the first raised of the Aberdeen units; still less to the Atholl Brigade or Ogilvy's regiment.

Before deciding that these units—Glenbucket's, Atholl's, and Ogilvy's—wore the 'short cloaths' described above in the case of Stonywood's, two points must be borne in mind: (1) We must assume that men in the Prince's army mostly wore their ordinary clothes. (2) We must know the composition of the Lowland units.

The term 'Lowland' units—in contradistinction to the original 'Clan' units—is by no means modern; it is used in contemporary Jacobite writings and in the Prince's Army Orders, and must be accepted. But the most casual reference to their

<sup>4</sup> *Spalding Club Miscellany*, i. 408.

composition shows that, to say the least of it, they were very mixed, as regards their origin.

The Atholl Brigade is a case in point. The three units composing it included the Menzies from Weem under Menzies of Shian, the Robertsons of Struan from Rannoch under Robertson of Woodshiel, and the Steuarts of Grandtully.

The Duke of Perth's regiment at first included two companies of McGregors under Malcolm McGregor younger of Craigruidhe, Balquidder.

Roy Stuart's regiment, nominally the Edinburgh unit of the force, was joined by the Steuarts of Grandtully.

It is more than probable that many of these men normally wore the 'Highland habit,' in the sense of the kilt, and continued to do so on enlistment.

Finally, writing of the Jacobite army generally to James, the Whig Duke of Perth, on 31st October 1745, Commissary Bissett described the advance of the Jacobite army into England and said: 'Of the above number of 5000 rebels I compute two thirds to be real highlanders and one third lowlanders, altho' they are putting themselves in highland dress like the others.'<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps, therefore, Home and the Derby journalist were not far wrong in their observations.

The reader must draw his own inference from the very few facts at his disposal, without relying too much on the statements of Home and the Derby correspondent on the one hand, or taking the modernist theories seriously.

The most reasonable view is one which involves a compromise. It is rather more than probable that many of the men of the Atholl Brigade, Glenbucket's, Perth's, and both battalions of Ogilvy's regiment wore the kilt; it is improbable that the bulk of Lord Lewis Gordon's regiment did so, although Bannerman's Kincardineshire unit, and Farquharson's Deeside and Braemar men probably did. Roy Stuart's Edinburgh unit almost certainly wore 'short cloaths' like Stonywood's, except in so far as it included some of the Perthshire Steuarts.

And, as regards officers, the Highland habit probably consisted in the majority of cases of a tartan doublet, trews and plaid, while some of them may have worn the belted plaid as others did the 'feileadh beag.'

*The Highland habit and the French officers.*—Before leaving the subject of the 'Highland habit' it is necessary to refer to

<sup>5</sup> *Atholl*, iii. 78.

one aspect of it, the only reference to which in Jacobite literature appears to be in Sir John Strange's account of the trial of that gallant young officer, Major Nicholas Glascoe, of the French Army, Dillon's regiment.

Evidence for the Crown showed that, while marching from Dundee to Stirling with some French soldiers—probably men of his own unit—he was wearing a 'short highland waistcoat and white cockade, with pistols before him and a sword by his side.' It was on this march that Glascoe, very much against his will, was ordered to join Ogilvy's second battalion as a major. Another witness stated that when serving in that battalion he was wearing 'Highland clothes,' which, as he was a mounted officer, would probably have consisted of a tartan coat, waistcoat, plaid, and trews or breeches.

The most interesting point, however, is that, in the course of the evidence for the defence, two French officers, Captains McDermott and John Burke, stated that they themselves and many of their brother officers of the French service 'got highland clothes as a protection against the highlanders who joined us' and 'to avoid danger in travelling in red clothes.'

Here again, however, the definition of that term is left a matter of speculation; but it is probably fair to assume that, in practice, the 'Highland habit' of these French officers was that of the officer class in the Highlands at the time—not the kilt, but tartan jacket and trews.

*Tartans.*—The references to tartans are numerous, but little or nothing is known about the clan tartans of the '45.

From contemporary pictures it may be said that it is not possible to identify any approximately resembling the tartans of to-day. That they had definite setts, and that the colours employed may have been peculiar to the parts of the country where the necessary dyes were obtainable, is a matter of common knowledge. But, having recognised that the tartans of that day were only distinctive in the sense that they were woven in setts of particular colours, that is all that can be said about them with any degree of certainty.

The tartan of the Stewart kilt and doublet referred to above bears no real relation to the Stewart tartan of to-day, and Lord Ogilvy's tartan doublet as depicted in his painting could not be regarded as made of the Ogilvy tartan as worn by his descendants.

An interesting reference to the efforts made to procure tartan for the troops is contained in a letter from John Stuart (or

Drummond) dated Drummond Castle, 3rd November 1745 to 'Capt. James Stuart at the Duke of Perth's Lodgings in the Canongate,' quoted by W. Drummond Norie in *Some Personal Narratives of the Forty-Five*, an invaluable source of information.

'Amongst other things I have been endeavouring to get tartan and plaids provided for the men, and some time ago sent a note of tartan that I was having weave in Crief for that purpose, to His Grace. . . . You'l therefore put His Grace in mind to return me an answer by this bearer.

'I have likewise bought some double plaids in the country and about fifty yards of coarse tartan which may be of use for plaids or hose, all of which may be sent by carrier.'

Getting no reply to his letter, Stuart wrote direct to the Duke on 3rd November and referred again to the matter of the tartan. He said :

'I have since bought about 50 yards more of coarse tartan at Jowel's market, which will be of use either for winter plaids or short coats, and may be sent, with what is getting ready at Crief' (Drummond Norie).

*The White Cockade.*—The Jacobite army, as already stated, was not a uniformed one, except in the case of a few units ; but the clan regiments almost certainly had nothing that could be called uniform.

As, however, distinguishing marks were necessary in their own interest, the solution of the difficulty was the wearing of the 'white cockade,' which appears to have been universal. Very numerous references to this practice appear in the Prisoners' Lists, the Jail Returns in Scotland, and the State Papers, as well as in such works as *The Lyon in Mourning*. When clans and families were divided, as they were in the '45, into Jacobite and Hanoverian, and were opposed to each other, the white cockade was the distinguishing badge between them ; on the other hand, in the case of Loudoun's regiment, which was also not distinctively clad, it is recorded that the men wore red crosses in their bonnets.<sup>6</sup> In spite of these badges cases occurred in which opposing parties mistook each other, with disastrous results.

The wearing of a white cockade thus came to have a profound significance and to be regarded as an indication that a man had carried arms in the Jacobite army ; and in most of the trials one of the most damning evidences against a prisoner was the sworn testimony that he had been seen wearing it. To many a man

<sup>6</sup> *Lyon*, i. 88.

that cockade indeed was the determining cause of his receiving 'The King's Mercy' in the form of transportation across the seas, or even of his execution.

The most striking example of the wearing of the cockade being formally put forward in an indictment is that of Colonel Francis Townley, commanding the Manchester Regiment. Sir John Strange, in his opening speech for the prosecution, said 'he armed himself with a sword, a gun, a pair of pistols, and put on a plaid sash, and a white cockade, the distinguishing marks of the rebel army.'<sup>7</sup>

In the British Museum, in the Correspondence of Lord Hardwicke,<sup>8</sup> is preserved a white silk cockade, which had probably belonged to an officer, inscribed with the words 'With Charles our brave and merciful P.R. we'll greatly fall or nobly serve our Country' (p. 108).

BRUCE SETON.

<sup>7</sup> *Allardyce*, ii. 375.

<sup>8</sup> Addl. MSS. 35590.