

The Battle of Littleferry



•DORNOCH•
HERITAGE SOCIETY



Thurs November 7th 7.30pm

Royal Dornoch Golf Club. Free entry - open to all



Talk to the Dornoch Heritage Society By Major General Patrick Marriott CB CBE



First of all, a bit of an apology. I'm not a professional historian. I'm a soldier first and foremost, but I have a love, like nearly everyone here, for history. And I got into the Battle of Littleferry when I discovered that no one had really looked at the battle and I thought, well, I'll have a go at that and there wasn't a great deal of work or research that ever really got on about this. In fact, I found lots of documents which had quite literally never been read since the 18th century, which was very exciting. But I do want to just emphasize that the great Kathleen Lyon, very much one of your own,

a Dornoch lady, who I owe a great deal to. She started to research this battle and then sadly died. But she did provide me with a number of really important clues, and she was definitely 'on the money'. So, Dornoch, you're out ahead here with the great Kathleen Lyon, and huge thanks from me to her for what she set up. So let's go to the battle. back in time to 1746.

It was a rotten year for everybody. It's the time of the Civil War, and the weather is shocking. 1746, if you look at the weather statistics, was an absolutely awful year. And throughout the period of this story, I'll try not to go back to the weather, but just bear in mind that it was awful from start to finish. Everybody suffered in the weather.

So let's go to July 1745, and we've got Prince Charles Edward Stuart, the old pretender's son, landing in Scotland and it's the start of something of a revolution. There's excitement, there's worry across the whole of the United Kingdom, because it is Great Britain at that stage. He moves south. I'm going to be quite quick on the context, because I want to focus on the battle. He moves south. He wins this extraordinary battle at Prestonpans, which worries the government forces. It was an extraordinary battle, where the 'Highland Charge' really cut its teeth. He then heads down, and let's be quite clear, that Bonnie Prince Charlie gets as far as Derby. I mean, who on earth would ever go to Derby? But he gets down as far as Derby. And then, for all sorts of reasons, he turns around and he heads back up. He heads all the way up to Edinburgh and near Edinburgh, fights the battle at Falkirk, which is a horrific battle, fought in the most awful weather, it really was grim. And it's an important battle I'm going to refer to later on, because the Cromarty's regiment, who are one half of who's going to be fighting at Littleferry, they fight at Falkirk and not hugely successfully.

He continues his retreat north with the Jacobites and ends up getting to Inverness in February 1746. At Inverness, which is barely defended, there are two light companies in the old Castle, not the current. It's still called Fort George, but it's where the Castle is now. That falls very quickly, almost without a fight. And Inverness has suddenly become the Jacobite heartland. This is where it's all really going to turn on Inverness.

So what we're going to do now, I'm going to set the scene a little bit. You've got the Jacobite army there. You've got government forces in somewhat disarray. And just bear in mind, they're rattled, okay. They're all rattled. Cumberland, who's going to lead this army, starts to train them. And they train really well as a result of the early Jacobite successes at Prestonpans, when they broke government forces with this extraordinary Highland Charge. So you've got one force, and it's all to do with morale, one force that's moved up to Inverness, rattled, tired. It's over 500 miles down to Derby and they marched back. The Jacobites were brilliant marchers, but they're tired. They're feeling dispirited and you've got the government forces itching to have a go at them, and being trained very professionally. So that's quite important, because that will affect how the Battle of Littleferry is fought.

So now what we'll do, is we'll look at the two sides that are going to fight at Littleferry. And I'll just talk about them, because it's really important to understand how they all work.

Now we're mainly concerned with a regiment of Jacobites called Cromarty's Regiment, raised by the 3rd Earl of Cromartie. And they number about 300 to 500 men. They're recruited really from and are nearly all Mackenzies. Some of them were recruited on the west coast, some of them were recruited on the east coast. So the clan is split between the two and there's a really good mix. The motivation of these people, I'm not going to talk about the cause of this war, because that's far too

complicated, and thousands of people wiser than I have written books about that. But the motivation of these people is primarily loyalty to their laird, loyalty to the Earl. That's no doubt what drives it most. There's lots of other things, but you've got to really feel, you want to think through their eyes about that loyalty. This group, Cromarty's Regiment, during the battle, take on a number of other small clan groupings, Macdonald of Berriedale and McGregor of Glencarnock. They both bring about 100 to 200 men. And they're all joined in this one force.

Cromarty's Regiment, going all the way back to Prestonpans and Falkirk, have not had a good war. The Earl himself is not a military leader. He's a wonderful man. And I've spoken to John Mackenzie about what his ancestors were like, there's no doubt about it. He was a wonderful, very much a family man, you get this feeling. But he was not a soldier. His son, on the other hand, Lord Macleod, is actually referred to by Lord Lovat as a military freak. He is absolutely a natural soldier. Indeed, in years to come, he's going to rise up and he's going to become a General in his own sake.

But the morale of Cromarty's Regiment is not that good. At Falkirk, in the rain, they take part in a highland charge, but it doesn't go terribly well. It all gets a bit confused. And in fact, Lord Macleod, Cromarty's son, loses his father and spends some time in the battle struggling around trying to find where Dad is. He eventually finds Dad, who's bumbling around like Mr Pickwick, because he's not very efficient. And they meet up.

But the Regiments, these are not natural soldiers. I get a sense that they're not wholly committed to this fight, but they are committed to the Earl, who they love very much. All credit to him. They're knackered. They've missed a harvest. And those on the West know that their wives and children are over there, they've missed a harvest and they're hungry. So their morale is furthered, they're near home now and desertions start to increase. There are really quite large numbers of Mackenzies who head West and some who head East around here and just filter away and go home. They've more or less had enough. And the weather is grim, I'm afraid. The weather is absolutely grim. So their morale is quite low.

Now, in mid-March, the Duke of Perth's Regiment, the Third Duke of Perth, joins this force. And Bonnie Prince Charlie orders the two Regiments, with a number of others in fact, and he orders them North. He says, right, depart Inverness, head North. That's a loyal government area. We want to get in amongst them and what I want you to do is to fix any government forces you find up there so they don't interfere what I want to do around Inverness. And incidentally, get any men you can, any money you can, and any weapons you can. Those are literally the orders given, in fact, to Perth. Perth commands this little force of two Regiments, Cromarty's and his own. They start to move North. Basically, they don't meet anyone because the government forces are pretty shambolic up here under Lord Loudoun. They're scattered. They're a mixture of reserve forces and militia forces. Loudoun, not a great leader, has placed his people scattered over a wide area. They're not really capable of coming together to form a proper military force.

On the 20th and the 21st of March, the Duke of Perth carries out an absolute act of brilliance. He carries out this river assault across the Firth, across to Meikleferry as we know it. Now this is a brilliant operation. They go across in thick fog, primarily in the morning, and they do it almost undetected even though there are government forces over here. And Dornoch literally falls without a fight. The history here is completely confused because of course it was written by the victors, like all history is, and they didn't do very well. So they write, it's not very clear as to what actually goes wrong at Dornoch, but essentially the government forces are scattered, but not everyone agrees that

not a shot was fired. It's a brilliant operation, absolutely superb. When they get here, the Earl of Cromartie continues further north, and he goes up and heads across at Littleferry, where they capture three or four ships, a cairn, a bit of money, with a little bit of a scrap at Littleferry, where I live. So that's great and then they move along Ferry Road and they take Dunrobin Castle.

Dunrobin Castle falls without a shot being fired as well. And the 17th Earl of Sutherland, who is an important man in terms of the forces he raises, he flees. He gets into the nearest available rowing boat, goodness knows where it was, and heads across to join up with Cumberland and the government forces who are down as far away at this stage as Aberdeen, where they're training and training and training. And he'll take no further part in this battle. One other man goes with him, who's going to be quite important, a man called Hugh Munro.

The Munro family live at Clayside, which is now just ruins, and it's about four or five hundred yards northwest of Dunrobin Castle in the fields up there, near Big Barns. And Hugh Munro is going to be important. He's the heir apparent of the Munro estates down near Invergordon. He's a loyal farmer but what he leaves behind, most importantly, when he flees he leaves his son, who's called Hector. Now if any of you have seen Blackadder, you'll know there's this wonderful character called 'Lord Flashheart'. Hector is Lord Flashheart in every single way. I mean he's wonderful. He's only 21 years old and he's just a great character. He's eclipsed only by a greater character, which is his mother, Isabel, who is absolutely wonderful. And there's a portrait of her down near Invergordon, with Ronnie Munro Ferguson. He took me up about three or four storeys to see this portrait which I've never seen in the light of day. And there is the most scary lady you could ever see. She's right up in the loft so nobody can get scared. And she's utterly wonderful. She has a really important part to play in this battle.

So we've now got to the middle of March thereabouts. Dunrobin Castle has fallen. And who have we got up here? Well we've got Perth. He stays in his regiment broadly around Dornoch. Over the other side of Loch Fleet, you've got Cromarty's regiment, three to five hundred as I said, led by the Earl and the mad Lord MacLeod. And then you've got one or two other little extra groupings who are with them, who are not actually going to take part in the fight. So the Jacobites base themselves in the castle, but they billet people throughout Golspie and at Clayside, which is described as a manorial farm. It's quite big. And they put a number of people in Clayside, a number of people in Golspie. And they set about very gently harrying the north. I say gently because I think it's really important that even then, everybody was related to everybody else, just as they are now. It's why we must never, as Granny said, you never should have a bad word for anyone. And Granny was right, and she would be right in the 18th century as well. But they are under orders from Bonnie Prince Charlie, so they do go out and they try and get money, they try and get men, they try and get arms and so on.

And there's the odd little skirmish up near Brora in fact, but nothing too dramatic. At the end of March, very importantly, Perth's regiment departs. So the force in the north suddenly is halved.

We've now just got Cromarty and a few other extra people as well. That's all we've got up there. Everybody talks about the rough numbers and they vary hugely depending on who writes the history, but I reckon Cromarty's regiment at this stage is probably about four to five hundred strong or thereabouts, based as I said in Golspie.

We then get a bit of a red herring, but it will become important, between the 24th and the 26th of March the Battle of Tongue takes place. It's called the Battle of Tongue. Hands up all who are Mackays please. Mackays are one of my most favourite clans. They do nothing but fight. In their history, they produce more major generals than any other clan in Scotland. Yes! I absolutely love Mackays. They just do nothing but fight. When they can't find another clan to fight, they fight amongst themselves. Their history is just fantastic. So the Battle of Tongue takes place up in Mackay country, right up in the north.

And what happens is that the French, who as usual are regarded as the bad guys, it doesn't matter who you write about, the French are always the bad guys. They supporting Bonnie Prince Charlie, actually very bravely, have sent a ship up. It's a captured British ship in fact. It's now called 'Le Prince Charles' and it wasn't originally. It's sent up and it has a number of French soldiers on board. It also has some Irish soldiers on board. It has weapons, it has ammunition but most importantly it's got money because Bonnie Prince Charlie down in Inverness is running out of dosh.

The Royal Navy play a really important part, incidentally partly in Culloden and partly at Littleferry, they dominate Cromarty Firth. They intercept this ship and 'HMS Sheerness', which is a slightly bigger ship, sets off in pursuit of 'Le Prince Charles' and heads up along the east coast, past the Helmsdale, all the way up round the top. And at this stage, 'Le Prince Charles' thinks, well if we cut into Tongue, we're a bit smaller, we might be okay, we can just get in here and they won't be able to follow us in.

'HMS Sheerness', the captain of which goes on in later days to be a 'Rear Admiral of the Blue'. I love these titles, isn't that wonderful. He is a brilliant seaman. He moves his ship in to Tongue, and you can still see where the battle takes place, and the 'Sheerness', just pounds the 'Le Prince Charles' really hard. They eventually beach it, abandon it and the Mackay's take all the troops, prisoner. It was a little bit of a scrap. The gold, very important, where does the gold end up? Well, no one quite knows. There are all sorts of wonderful stories!

Now it is important though because the Mackay's who are up there consist of two companies and I'm going to talk about them in a moment. So they're now away from where the Battle of Littleferry is going to take place and I'm going to talk about the government side in a moment but I'm just going to focus on the Jacobite side.

So forget the Battle of Tongue, move back down to civilisation, Dornoch, and everywhere else. Tensions are starting to build. Now you've got to remember that right from the outset, the Mackenzie's, the Sutherland's, the Mackays, the Ross', the Monroes, all the clans around here, they all knew each other, they all married each other's sisters and daughters and all the rest of it. They knew each other so there's a real feeling in all the histories, they didn't really want a bloodstained fight. This is nothing like post Culloden. This is going to be a reluctant fight and I think that's important.

But tensions do start to build now as we're running towards this battle and two houses are burnt and you think well that's not very much but they're quite important because the two houses, one belongs to a man called Captain Hugh Gordon of Carroll and it's pretty much where Balder Coyle is now. His house is burnt to the ground and Captain John Clunes who's another captain of militia, his house is burnt. So what they've done now is they've burnt two quite popular leaders of two local militia companies.

So there's a bit of falling out taking place now and the tensions as I said are growing. Then we move into April. There are a few little skirmishes up in the hills and I'll come on to those in a moment but at that stage Prince Charles realises that Cumberland is coming for him with this machine of an army and it is a machine of an army.

It was very well disciplined. Prince Charles realising that the threat he's building recalls his regiments. So he's already got, Perth has already come back down there, he's gone already but there are one or two other groups who I said were with Cromarty's regiment but Donald's and McGregor's men now depart on the 13th of April.

The order probably gets up here on the 14th of April and Littleferry is going to be fought on the 15th of April but for all sorts of strange reasons Cromarty decides he's not going to leave on the 14th of April, he's going to leave on the 15th of April. He leaves it a day late. His force is now probably around 400 I reckon between 300 and 400 or thereabouts.

Still in Dunrobin, still in Golspie, still in Clayside but now with orders prepared to move basically. So that's the Jacobites on the eve of the battle. Now we'll switch across and we'll go to the government side.

So for the government side at this, what we've got is we've got four companies of local militia and then you've got two companies of reservists, the so-called independent companies and people have written books about the independent companies and it's quite complicated and I'll keep that really simple. So there are a total of six companies loyal to the government up here and just to give you an idea of the differences, the independent companies were raised throughout the history of the Highlands really all the way up to the Black Rock because people are always scrapping up here basically and the government sees the raising of these companies as a way to keep the lid on it. The two companies, the independent companies as it were, get some training.

So these are really, as they would be now the TA (Territorial Army), these are reservists, they have redcoats, they get some weapons, they're full of ex-military people. Remember there's been a war on the continent fought and Mackays go out there and fight in droves. There's huge experience fought quite literally by the Mackays but they're in these TA companies.

So those two companies are around and then you've got the militia. So the four companies of militia are, two of them are raised by Mackays, two of them are raised by Sutherland, so the two earls basically do the raising. This is Dad's army, quite literally. The officers are chosen because they are their factors or they run a better pub than somebody else. If there had been bank managers it would have been the bank manager. They've had no training at all. They wear what they get up in in the morning, quite literally the militia, but they all know each other and most importantly they know the ground brilliantly, absolutely brilliantly.

Scroll back now to the 20th of March and Dornoch. Loudoun is being dispersed the best way. Perth and Cromarty have come across on that brilliant river assault.

Let's just concentrate now on what effect that has on the government forces. So those six companies who are broadly up here, they are shattered. They don't know what to do, they know they're not well trained, they've seen Cromarty and Perth regiments come across who have been pretty well bloodied, Preston Pans, Falkirk and then you know they've had some experience and they realise if they stand as a group they will not be able to win this battle.

So what they do is they meet on the 21st of March at Saval, it no longer exists, it's just northeast of Lairg, it's just a few dotted crofts now, but the six company commanders all meet there one evening and they decide let's disperse, we're going to just have to go into this guerrilla type war. It's a masterful decision, it's the only thing they could possibly do and then they say when circumstances are better then perhaps we can meet Cromarty's regiment and have a fight but for now let's go back to our cross, back to our farms, let's just head into the hills and that's what they do. And the two reserve companies who are eventually going to take that ship, the Prince Charles, all right, one's a Mackay company, one's a Southern company, they head north, they're going to take no further part in this battle.

So all that's left now are just four militia companies, Dad's army, the two reserve companies have gone well north, right the way up to the top and they're scattered, these militia companies, they're all over, they're all over the place. One of those companies is largely recruited from Helmsdale and up, right up in the north and it's commanded by a man called Captain Clunes, remember he had his house burned, he will a little bit later on, he, those people all head up to Helmsdale and around that general area in Kildonan and actually that company will take no further part in the Battle of Littleferry. So you're now down to just three militia companies scattered in the hills around Brora and Golspie, that's where they are.

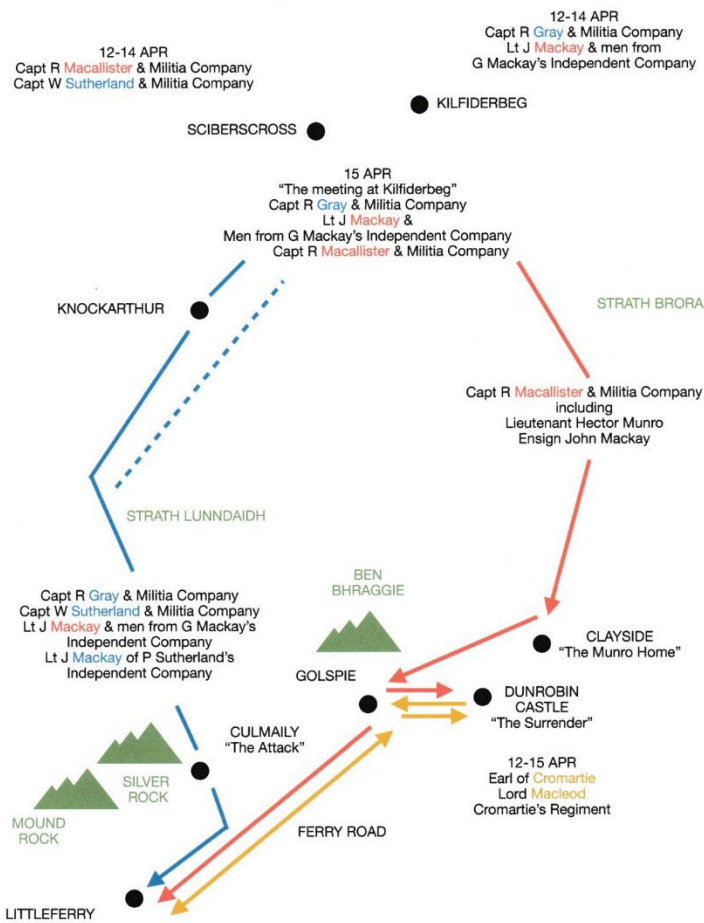
Let's just look at those three companies because they're quite fun. There is a Dornoch company but it's called the Dornoch, Creich and Lairg company and I've only found one reference to it being called that but that's the easiest thing to describe it. It's commanded by Captain Robert Gray, his family will eventually own Ospisdale and it's a pretty good company.

The second in command is Lieutenant Patrick Gray, funny old thing, he is like Dad's army, if you've got a good son you make him too I see and there's an ensign there called Duncan Matheson and I'm going to talk about Duncan Matheson who comes across as rather an interesting character, he's from Shinn Ness. So that's the Dornoch company, Dad's army remember, only they've just got a few swords and a few muskets, not much more. Then you've got the Clyne company from Brora, originally commanded by Captain Hugh Gordon of Carroll.

Remember he's had his house burned so he's fled to the hills as well and actually he, as an individual, will not take part in this battle but that company is going to be commanded by Lieutenant William Sutherland. Is William here tonight? No he's not, that's a good thing. William does pretty well, he does pretty well and there's an ensign in there called John Clunes. I mean they're all related to each other, it's just the same as now, everyone is a cousin of somebody else. Then of course we get the Golspie company which I've left until the end because it is by far the most important. Now it's commanded by Captain Robert McAllister, one of the Earl's lads.

He's got all these, they call them factors, at the time they didn't just have one factor, they had half a dozen factors and they did different jobs but they're essentially the leaders in their area. Robert McAllister comes across as the lovely chap, he's quite old and he's fat. We know that he's fat because it actually describes him as arriving after his company at the battle because he just can't get there in time because he's breathing and wheezing at the back.

BATTLE OF LITTLEFERRY 15 APRIL 1746



So we'll come on to Fatty McAllister later on. His second in command however is Lieutenant Hector Munro, 'Lord Flashheart', who is not fat, he's lean, lean and as my daughter would describe him, quite hot. And then you've got Ensign John Mackay who is a vintner. He runs a pub in Golspie and the history gets muddled after the battle. They all thought it was John Mackay of Moordale who was a poet. Poets don't fight, not much and they got the muddle.

But I know this because I've been through all the Mackay histories. Most importantly I've spoken to, I think it's John Mackay who's writing the new Mackay history and lives in Dornoch and he and his wife Lady Mackay spent a week or so very kindly researching, more actually I think probably a month or so, researching this and he's finally had a eureka moment and found that there were about half a dozen John Mackays at the time and he realised that this was the one, this publican, because you could only have

done what he did if you really knew the ground. And if you were John Mackay of Moordale you hadn't the faintest idea what went on around Golspie but this guy knew all about it, there's no doubt about it.

So those are the three government companies, hopelessly untrained, a fantastic bunch of mates but they know the ground really well and they love each other very much. Let's move on to the battle itself I think. So what are those three companies doing really up in the hills? Well they're doing all sorts of things.

Now whereas the Jacobite forces are really, they're in sort of enemy territory so it's much more difficult for them to operate, this lot are at home but they're up in the hills but they've been quite well fed. And one of the lovely things about Littleferry is unlike most battles at the time which is just men-only affairs, in this battle some of the heroes are women. We are going to come back to Isabel Monroe, she with a really, really scary face.

They're doing three things and it's really important that we pay attention to them because this is the soldier's eye on the battle. Well the first thing they're doing is they're gaining intelligence. They have a brilliant network. It'll be as good as the gossips in Dornoch, I promise you it really will. They have superb spies. There is an amazing man called James Mackay who features in the book who is a customs official in Inverness. He lives in Inverness but very quickly comes up here and he will pass

information as far away as Cumberland by ship and he does three night crossings of the Firth. Backwards and forwards from Cumberland and the Earl of Sutherland when they're there. Back up to the men in the hills. The story of this extraordinary man is worth writing a book. The villagers are brilliant because of course they're going up most days to go and feed their menfolk up in the hills. And you've got others. You've got John Sutherland, he's a brewer. You've got Dougal Gilchrist, he's the Scott Morrison of Dunrobin Castle. That's what he's doing, Dougal Gilchrist. And then you've got this most wonderful lady, Isabel Munro, who as I said with the scary face, married to Hugh who's gone off to join the Earl but the mother of Hector. She is extraordinary and I'm going to tell you about her later on. She's particularly good at spying because in Clayside, where she's now running a sort of extended bed and breakfast for the enemy, for the Jacobites, and she sees them, one of whom incidentally is her cousin, which tells you they're all quite well related, they've billeted in there two officers and 40 men. And every morning they meet around the table and they're fed by Isabel, egg and bacon or whatever they're going to get as it were, and they discuss the activities of the day and how well the news is going on. And Isabel is there listening-in. Twice a day, the accounts say, she sends expresses, which meant messages at the time, up into the hills with what was planned and what was going to happen. So the government men up in the hills knew exactly what was happening all the time. She's a wonderful lady and let's be quite clear about it, she's very brave as well, very brave. I'll read you an account which was written by Hugh Munro, so her husband, after the battle.

"Daily she sent intelligence to him, Hector, her son, and the company. Very often, every 24 hours, an account of the rebels' motions, conversation, yea, what ammunition each of them had, and as they were severally quartered. For after those who had lodged at Clayside went to bed, she would send expresses every night to Dunrobin for intelligence".

She's a cracking star. She is wonderful. So that's the first thing they're doing and this is really important.

The second thing they're doing is they're gaining arms and ammunition. And in the second edition of the book, I've got a couple of wonderful quotations from contemporary sources. I've got lots of primary sources. It was very exciting. And the ladies of Golspie are carrying arms and ammunition, ball and powder, it says under their petticoats, up and to the hills, up to the men. I isn't that absolutely wonderful? The heroes. This is a battle that's incredibly human.

The third thing they're doing is they're regrouping. Now Fatty MacAllister might have been quite fat and not a natural soldier, but he was a wise man, and as were all of them. And up in the north, what happens is, after the Prince Charles has taken that ship, the Mackays, who really lead up there, send a number of their officers and senior NCOs in scarlet coats down here and they go into the hill. They probably arrived about two to three days before the battle.

And we know this because we've got accounts written by some of them. And this is where the history got confused up until a few years ago really. It wasn't the companies that came down, it was some individuals to provide leadership and stiffening for the militia. That's what actually happens. They bring one man in particular who's really important, and I'm sad to say he's another John Mackay. There are John Mackays all over the place here.

He's Lieutenant John Mackay of Tordarroch. Later on he'll live at Cyderhall, not far away from here. And he's been trained up by his grandfather and his father. He's really a pretty wise leader as you will see. So he comes back and he's able to give them proper military advice. So there's the two

sides. I hope you've got that. Happy with that so far? So let's switch forward and now we'll go through in chronological order the events of the Battle of Littleferry.

It's the 13th or 14th of April and if you remember the order's gone out and Cromarty has decided to spend an extra day up here for whatever reason it was, and there are some quite good reasons. There are one or two ridiculous ones, like the Countess of Sutherland, who was still in Dunrobin Castle incidentally, having an affair with Cromarty. Well may or may not, who cares what might be going on. There's talk and there's all kinds of magicians coming in the morning and they wanted to watch a sort of magic show. That sounds a bit bizarre. That was Stevenson who said that. And there are a number of other reasons why things get a bit delayed. But probably he just thought, I think we'll just take time, it's not happening that quickly, let's get everyone together and then we'll all go in a reasonable group.

On the 14th of April, really importantly, James Mackay the spy, Isabel and a number of others start to pass information that Cromarty's regiment is about to head south up to the men in the hills. They send down to Dunrobin Castle Sergeant William Mackay, loads of Mackays, who goes into Dunrobin Castle, meets up with Dougal Gilchrist, the Factor there, and says, what's happening, what's happening, what's happening? And yep, they're about to go.

You've got to move quickly. If you want to have a go at these guys, you're going to have to do it tomorrow morning. James Mackay, Sergeant William Mackay goes back up into the hills.

James Mackay the spy, the other one who's been going back and forth to Cumberland in a boat basically, he passes the message to Cumberland, in fact probably the night before, but there are no sources for that so we just have to take a guess. What we do know is that in the week before the Earl of Sutherland and Cumberland, they're both together now and they're not far from Nairn, get the message through this man, James Mackay, in his little boat he comes across. Whatever you do, don't let Cromarty's regiment leave.

The orders are definitely got up and into the hills. The weather is grim. I'm afraid the weather is grim typically.

So what happens is all these messages start to arrive all within 24 hours and we just can't tell exactly the order they arrive, but what we do know is it creates the great Kilfiderbeg meeting. Now Kilfiderbeg is right at the top of Loch Brora, literally at the very top of it, so beyond Balboa Coil, it's now being cleared out. You can't see it but I know where it is.

The Kilfiderbeg meeting takes place when the officers meet and decide what they're going to do and the best thing I could possibly do is read, because Kathleen Lyons, wonderful, she started to write some of this down and her account just dries up, but one of the last bits she writes is absolutely beautiful. Her English incidentally was wonderful and I wish I could have met her. Here's what she says about the Kilfiderbeg meeting.

"It needs little imagination to imagine the council of war that took place on the receipt of this news. The dark smoky hut somewhere at the head of Loch Brora, the reek of peat and woollen clothes and the excited faces of the men. Some were for returning home, but other expresses arrived through the night, bringing word that now was the time or never to attack. Runners were sent out with orders to gather the men with or without their arms and word was given to march at dawn".

Oh, amazing stuff, the smell of wet wool is just fabulous. So now we've got a number of officers all gathered in and they're sending messages out to gather the men in as fast as they possibly can and they hatch a simple and brilliant plan.

Lieutenant John Mackay of Tordarroch we know was part of this planning because it's recorded quite well afterwards and he writes a wonderful account of what he does to his father afterwards and he talks about being at the meeting and nobody says he wasn't there, so I'm quite certain he provides some military stiffening here. It's a simple plan but it can only be executed by people who really know the ground so it was only the militia who could possibly do this because it's all going to have to happen, the setting up of it, the setting the conditions is what the army will call it now, by night in foggy weather, don't forget. So this is a wonderful night march they're going to do.

They're going to send one company to Dunrobin Castle to try to fix Cromarty's regiment so they can't move out to slow them down and that's going to be led by the Goldspit company and Fatima Callister. Two companies they send to Culmaily, that's William Sutherland and Grey's companies, they're going to go and if you could imagine the route they had to take, they had to go a little bit further up Loch Brora then across and they're going to come down Strath Lunndaidh and that's where they come down, all the way down they get to the top of Angus MacColl's farm overlooking the A9, not that it was an A9 then. Three companies, their total strength is probably about 200 people, they had to get them in very quickly and these are not trained people but they're a little bit more fired up now because relations have deteriorated as they go by.

In order to survive the Jacobites took cattle and so on and did a certain amount of damage, it wasn't nasty, they were doing it to survive but nevertheless that's livelihood so there was animosity building. The battle is essentially three skirmishes which are going to take place it was once named as the skirmish at Littleferry, it's a linear fight over four miles and from Dunrobin Castle all the way down to Littleferry itself, that's where it's going to fight. So, I'll deal with it in three chunks and first of all I'll tell you what happens in Golspie.

So early in the morning on the 15th of April, this is the day before the Battle of Culloden is fought, the first shots of the Battle of Culloden were fired at 1pm that day. On the 15th of April though Cromarty's regiment starts to move out and they're all spread out, it's an utter shambles frankly, it's a military nightmare. What happens is for a reason which we'll never know, Cromarty and Macleod, if you remember the military freak, his son, and the officers, the sort of battalion headquarters really, stay behind in the castle.

I have no idea why, maybe there was a good breakfast or whatever, they stay behind and the companies, three companies, are led by quote junior officers and we know their names, they're nearly all Mackenzies. They set out in a sort of line from Dunrobin Castle along through Duke Street, long through Golspie, past Fishertown and out past the golf club, not that it was there, along Ferry Road. But they're really well spread and they haven't got the right officers in place, these are young, tired people, they just haven't got the right command and control in there.

Pause on that, let's go back to Fatima Callister. It's about midnight, we think, they set off the Golspie Company, undoubtedly led by Lord Flasheart himself, and they go on a route which you can pretty much work out, there is only one route they can go, they go down the west side of Loch Brora, cut across to Martin Jansen and Uppat and then they go from Uppat to Clayside. We know they go to Clayside and that's the only possible route that they could have taken and if you look at some of the

oldest maps, you'll see that there are tracks along all these various places, so I think that's where they went.

At Dunrobin they meet William Munroe, who's a carpenter, they meet Isabel Munroe, we think as well, that we know about, and they meet Dugald Gilchrist, the sort of Scott Morrison equivalent in Dunrobin Castle, and they meet another man called John Sullivan, who's a brewer, I mean it's just a classic isn't it, not a soldier amongst them but they're a great bunch of blokes. And they all say, look it's too late, it's too late, the Earl Cromartie and his officers are still in here, they're still here, but most of the companies are all leaving now, you're just going to have to do something really quickly. They hatch a plan which is that Dugald Gilchrist, when the Earl leaves, will raise a red flag on the tower, on the castle, so they know when the people are leaving.

Now at the time there were no woods around there, or very few woods, and you could see Dunrobin Castle from Duke Street, from the White Church, St Andrews, you could literally see it, so they would have been able to see that red flag. What they do is they then, working around, they go near the mill in Golspie, the old mill near the 'White Church', they come down that little re-entrant and they take up a position in and around the White Church there, which is where we're going to get the first shots of the Battle of Littleferry. So, they set themselves up in an ambush, and by absolute chance they get into position, they're not seen, and they get between the three companies, the last one of which is probably exiting Fishertown, heading towards Littleferry, the first one is probably at Littleferry, and the other one's paused outside the Golf Club.

But they get between them and this battalion group of officers who are leaving the castle, so the red flag goes up, they're in position, when along Duke Street, and Duke Street existed, where those, the new houses are, where the old estate offices, there were two or three thatched cottages at the time, the manse on the other side was built before the battle, because the church, the White Church was put in about 1738 or thereabouts, so it was quite new, it was in place, the manse was in place, we don't know if the wall was there, but what we do know is the first shots were almost certainly fired at the Earl and about a group of about a dozen officers as they come along Duke Street, and they say they were fired from the Kirk Yard, so pretty much where the cemetery is of the White Church in Golspie, straight down Duke Street. Now muskets were not very efficient at that stage, they probably opened fire far too early, what we do know is that they wounded a Spanish officer, because that's well recorded, and the whole lot, Cromarty and his officers, head off back to Dunrobin Castle as fast as they possibly can, and they get into Dunrobin Castle, they close all the doors and they put a white flag up, the red one comes down, the white one goes up, and they ring the bell, they ring the bell like mad, and we know this because we got multiple accounts of this bell, and of course the bell can just about be heard probably by that last company, which is now exiting Golspie, but what they certainly could hear was a sound of shots being fired from the White Church at the Earl. So, the company in Golspie, the Jacobite company, turns around and starts to head back, because it wants to help the Earl, and we then get a fight in Golspie.

Fatty McAllister finally catches up with his company, at least here, about this stage. Half of his company goes to Dunrobin Castle, surrounds them, and will part that until the very end of the battle. The other half starts heading down, leaving Lindsay's on the left, down the High Street as it was, and there weren't many houses there, it was just a little sort of a few fishing, a few fishing bits and bobs and a few little cottages, and they have what the army would call a meeting engagement, two forces turning, and suddenly they meet somewhere near Fishertown or wherever in Golspie.

At this stage there's a most wonderful account of what changes everything. The villagers come out, they come out with pipes and with scythes, is what the account says, and they're only on one side, they all quite fancy the look of Hector Monroe, so the women and everybody, this is all, this is men and women are coming out now, so you've got half of McAllister's company pushing south, and you've got villagers coming out as well. We have a lovely account from Hector Monroe and his dad of what Lord Flashheart does in one of these things, and it's the reason that one of the battlefield tall stones is on the front of Golspie.

So what happens is that Hector, two fishing boats, the Jacobites try and steal two of them and head off as fast as they can, but Hector and a number of others open fire and they kill two men and they wound another, then there's a great surrender and the boats are brought in and Hector has fired his first shot, so he's very excited, and it's a mini, it's a little tiny vignette in the part of a battle, a running battle, which is now running slowly towards the golf club. I think the part of that bit of battle, that's Golspie, just pause that one, we'll leave it, that Hector, chuffed to bits, he's done his first bit, is leaving Golspie now, they're coming onto the Ferry Road proper and they're heading down towards the golf club, in front of them Jacobites are turning and starting to retreat. It's not a rout at this stage, so they're firing and manoeuvring and they're firing along the road. All the accounts say that there were casualties all along Ferry Road, small numbers all the way along Ferry Road. Apart that, that's McAllister's company now, we've got one half of Dunrobin, one half in Golspie, but moving towards the Ferry Road. So, let's go to Culmaily.

So, we had two companies going up there, including most importantly the Dornoch company, and well led by Gray. And they've moved by night. It's an incredible feat when you think about it, all the way along there, down through Strath Lunndaidh, they then have to go sort of cross-country, they're over the top and they pop out above what was described, well at the time it was known as George Gordon's house, that's what the accounts say, and Angus McColl, who's landed there, he and I are pretty certain we know where that is, there's just stones up there, but it's where the original farm wasn't down where it is now, it was further up the hill. So that's, they come up somewhere up there, just above where the Culmaily burn breaks, and you see that lovely fall when it's when it really rains above Culmaily.

Who have we got there? Well we've got Lieutenant William Sutherland, if you remember, he was now commanding his company because his company commander had his house burnt and he'd headed off. And Captain Robert Gray, your lot, companies are up there. They go via Loch Salachaidh, Strath Lunndaidh to Culmaily

It's a brilliant night march. They're lined up now, looking through the heather if you can imagine it, and what are they doing? They're absolutely bricking themselves, that's what they're doing. They're really, really scared.

Anyone, everyone would be if we were there now. You've got to sort of think through their, as they're not trained, they haven't got many arms and they're really scared. But they've got John Mackay at Tordarrach with them.

John Mackay leads a small recce group forward and he describes this in a story to his father. He takes with him Lieutenant William Mackay, Lieutenant Patrick Gray, and they crawl forward until they can see. What they see is a long ferry road and the road is in exactly the same position as it was in 1746.

They see McAllister's company coming out together with a number of villagers and so on, and they see a company in disarray, slowly heading towards Littleferry, probably somewhere around about the golf club. They don't, they probably can't see the other two companies, that one of them, it's possible one of them was coming back from Littleferry now to rejoin the others, but we just don't know. There's shambles along the ferry road and they decide, now's the moment, we've got to go.

And what courage that shows because the numbers they're seeing outnumber them by two to one. You know, there's probably around 300 down on the ferry road, certainly not less. Some of them, some of the figures are much bigger, but I think it was probably about 300.

And they are just two companies, so they're probably about 150. I mean, it's two to one, you might have three to one to do an attack in your favour, but in this case they definitely have not got that. But then they hatch an even better plan, which tells you that this, they had, this is where the reserve companies with these trained people who'd fought in the continent in the wars of succession, they added value here.

And what they do is they put a double pace between each man to make themselves look larger, and the two companies divide into three. So, if you're down at the golf club looking up, you see three masses and they look really big. I mean, that's an extraordinary thing to do for untrained militia, but they managed to do it. The exact description is 20 paces betwixt each rank, three divisions, and we know who commands the divisions. We have William Mackay, Lieutenant, who was one of the reserve company officers, so in a bit of scarlet. He leads the centre one, the up front one. You have John Mackay of Tordarroch, who leads the right-hand one, which is going to be nearest to Loch Fleet. And then you have Robert Gray on the left-hand side, nearest to Golspie. So, you've got this line of three, and they're going to look as big as they can.

We don't know the exact route they took, but we do know what the ground looked like, because it didn't look like anything that it does now. Patrick Seller, who might have been particularly bad at management, but was very good at agricultural engineering, he drains that in about 1810, but it's a moor. It's heather and moorland, and the Culmaily does not run the same place that it does now. It's being channelised, so it's in a dead straight line across the fields from Culmaily Farm down to Littleferry. But it wiggled its way across there, and you can still see, if you look very carefully at air photographs, some of them were taken in the 1940s when the airfield was in there, you can still see where the Culmaily went. And using that, you can work out where they would have gone, because they would have wanted a flank to be secure, so they kept the stream on one side, and they would have wanted to hit, you know, go the shortest distance, because they're after surprise, this great battle-winning factor.

And down they come. They come as fast as they can, and it's not a run, it's a sort of light trot all the way down. So now we've got the decisive act, really, of the Battle of Littleferry.

So somewhere between where the memorial now stands and where the Culmaily burn is, so if you stand at the memorial, looking towards Littleferry, so looking towards Dornoch, the land in front of you, known as the Cursed Field, it's a different story to tell you about the Cursed Field, but the Cursed Field, somewhere in there is almost certainly where the decisive act takes place. So, you've got this company in disarray, but totally fixed on MacAllister's company and Hector Munro, retreating along the ferry road, totally focused really on staying alive and retreating back towards Littleferry, when suddenly these three groups, actually just two companies, hits them in the flank. We know from

one account that the Jacobites, very bravely actually, make a very brief stand and fired one volley, because some casualties we think take place there, but we don't know anything more about that, and then they break, which is why it's the decisive act, to use the right term, and the Jacobites start to head off down Ferry Road as fast as their little legs can take them.

There are casualties all the way along. Hector Munro says that at this stage he put off his cloths, so he gets rid of his band, he gets rid of as much kit as he possibly can, because they're running along that road as fast as they can in pursuit of these Jacobites. All the way past my house, which is very exciting, and down past Janet's farm on the left and Sandy's farm and all the way down there, and then they get to the last bit of this battle, which is the last stand really of the Jacobites themselves.

We know a little bit about this, and we know that the Jacobites rally pretty much, if you go to Littleferry, there's a sort of mini crossroads only about 100 yards back from where the pier is now. There was a pier there, but it's not the one that's there now. There's a little crossroads, and that's quite high ground, so it's a logical place for them to stand and fire a volley from. There's nowhere else you would really do it, so my eye tells me that's probably where it happened, and they fire two volleys at the government forces who are pursuing them. We don't know quite how the government forces do it, but probably since there were three companies and they wheeled, remember, the whole area wasn't woods, it was just sand and heather and whins and so on. They probably came down almost three abreast, but it would have been much more disorganised than that.

When they get to where these volleys are fired, there's probably one company in the centre, which is Grey's company, and then you've got a Mackay company going one side and another Mackay company going the other side, so it's almost like a pincer movement. And after the two volleys are fired, the Jacobites in that little blob surrender quite wisely. They are completely stuffed, because at this stage the government forces were able to fire into the few boats that were there where Jacobites were attempting to surrender.

I'll read you a description of that, a contemporary description, by John Mackay of Tordarroch.

" We fell all in their rear, so that tells you they went around them as it were, came up with them near the ferry and in the end got 160 prisoners, in fact they got 178. We killed about 27 and about eight of them drowned. They got two large boats and three ships, yawls, which were there, and a great many stuck by our fire. Others lost their grip and perished. We have one account of Jacobites in one boat, cutting the fingers of men trying to get into the boats with their swords. It was not a good scene. A great many of them were wounded in the boats as we found them since, for all the way twixt this and ferry unes, (that's back near where my house is) many were lying ill of their wounds". Important this next sentence. *"And we kept them to be brought as prisoners when they recover. Some of them have died since. This was not like after Culloden."*

There was not butchery after this battle. They brought them back. We know that because a number of the prisoners who eventually will head off in two ships are wounded.

They did not kill them after the battle. And so the surrender takes place there. Captain John Clunes, you might remember his company, Helmsdale, so they were a bit further north and disconnected, they did not take part in the battle, but Clunes's company now arrives and they help mopping up with the prisoners and they're all marched back to Dunrobin Castle where, if you remember, the Earl is still holed up.

There's a lovely little vignette in here but it's a really sad one really and for the mothers in here. You've got a picture Isabel Munro who is a mother, albeit a scary one. She's got her son who's only 21 years old fighting in this battle and she doesn't know where he is. She just knows there's been an awful lot of shots and she's terrified. And then they march the prisoners back through Golspie, through Fishertown as it was then, through Golspie and they're escorted by the government things and she runs, we know, she runs into Golspie from wherever she was, Clayside or wherever she lived. She goes in there to try to find young Hector, Lord Flasheart, and she can't find him, and she twirls around and goes back to Dunrobin Castle. She's asking everyone, where's my son, where's my son, where's Hector? And there is Hector of course and he's, mum I marched right past you because his face, the account says, was so black from powder that she didn't recognise her own son. But what a great moment when she finally did.

So the battle ends at Dunrobin Castle and there's a trick played here, and this is Lieutenant John McKay, vintner, the pub, not the poet, if you remember. He, we left him behind when everyone else showed up at Littleferry. He, as any publican would, has a gift for the gab and he, we know the two rooms, so if you go to the nursery in the castle that is where the Earl and his officers were and down below in what's the southern clan room and now pretty much an empty room, that is where the guard were. And we know that John McKay goes in there and says to the guard, the Earl and the officers have all surrendered, will you put your arms down and come out? And they say, yes. And then he goes up and sees the Earl and says, you're a guard. And we know that's exactly what he did. Present there we have Dougal Gilchrist, if you remember, Scott Marsden is there, the Countess is there and the Earl and Norman Macleod hand over about a thousand pounds, that's very important, it's important, I'll come on to why it's important later on.

They send the carpenter, if you remember, another Sutherland, another William Sutherland, I think, he goes off to summon the navy, which he does very quickly. The two pistols, this is great, the Earl of Cromartie hands over his two beautiful pistols and he hands them to, wait for it, Hector Monroe, who's come all the way back of course with his back and face and everything. He hands them, because the two families knew each other, the Monroes and the Mackenzies knew each other really well. They were quite good mates before this wretched civil war kicked off. So he gives them and says, look after those, I'll see you later mate. And talking to John and Mackenzie, they had no idea where those pistols finally went to. It's another one of those great mysteries, like the gold that disappeared somewhere up in the north of Sutherland.

On the 16th of April 'HMS Hawk' turns up, Cromarty Firth has about half a dozen Royal Navy vessels and it's a brilliant, the Navy helps supply Cumberland's army as it comes up to Culloden, it's a very complex operation. But 'HMS Hawk' comes in and on the 17th of April 'HMS Hound' comes in, together with the 17th Earl of Sutherland and James Mackay the spy, who spends the time of the battle over there. So they're now all gathered, so the Earl finally is back with the Countess, whether she had a fling or not with Cromarty is never told.

That is the battle, I'll tell you about the aftermath very quickly (am I alright for time?). Casualties, so the Jacobites probably lost 50 to 100 dead, 50 to 80 escaped, and in my third edition, this is the second edition of the third edition, I've got a lovely story of at least one who we know heads up to Amat in fact and is looked after by a lady over there, and on her tombstone it actually tells the story how she rescued actually one of the sons of the clan chief of Ross and sheltered him over there. So quite a lot do escape in fact and run for it.

There are about 180 to 200 prisoners, one account, which is in the records as it were, gives 178, an exact figure, and that is it for the Jacobites, but it's a pretty serious butcher's bill, this was not a little skirmish, this was quite a fight. For the militia, only about 10 dead, probably about 20 wounded. One of the ones who's wounded is the sort of the great-grandfather of an international corporation, Lieutenant Matheson, you remember him, he was wounded, we think almost certainly actually at Littleferry where those two bodies were fired. He's the grandfather of Sir James Matheson, the co-founder of Jardine Matheson, and out in West Shinness, the house that Jonathan Brett Young lives in now, was the Matheson home at the time.

Hector Munro of course, Lord Flasheart, will go on to be the Ninth Commander-in-Chief in India, a Member of Parliament, and the Eighth Laird of Navar, so he has a pretty good start actually in life, so Lord Flasheart does okay. Southern, I'm afraid, is in bits, civil wars are always dreadful, there's a loss of cattle, burnt houses, damage to property, and Dunrobin Castle has been, trashed is too strong a word, but it's not in good order.

But the Jacobites suffer even more really, there's a pitiless pursuit, as everyone knows, after Culloden, it's just absolutely awful. Culloden incidentally is interesting, it's a huge, hugely significant and important battle, but it's a battle which has never been put on any regiment in the British Army's colours, ever, to this day, because it was a civil war and nobody wanted to associate with it, it was struck from the colours, so you'll never see Culloden on any battle on a regiment. The prisoners go to Inverness, they're then taken down to London, there are intercessions made on their behalf by the Earl of Sutherland and Cromarty's wife, Isabel, in particular for, sorry, Sutherland's, Cromarty's wife rather, so Isabel, who they all try to say, please don't execute the Earl and Lord Macleod, and of all of those who fought at Littleferry, none are executed, not a single man.

Macleod gets pardoned, but he has to surrender his title and lands, and they were regained in 1784, when he's by now Lieutenant-General and a member of Parliament. There's a lovely vignette of another real hero, have we got any ministers here at the church? Yes, we have. So, there's a wonderful man, whose name is James Robertson, from Loch Broom.

Scroll all the way back, before Derby, when Cromarty's regiment's being raised, I know a lot of them come from Loughborough, Mackenzie's over there, just as many Mackenzies from the east and the west coast as it were, but he's the man at Loughborough, and he from the pulpit says, look boys, do not join up. I know the Laird wants you to join up, but do not join up. They ignore him completely, and he's sort of cut off really, and they all go and join Cromarty's regiment. After this fight, James Robertson gets on a horse and goes all the way down to London and pleads on behalf of the Mackenzie's from his parish. I mean, that's an incredible way in 1746. He's an extraordinary character, and to all intents and purposes, he's part of the success, which is why none of them were executed. But sadly, they are deported, and they head off to Barbados, Jamaica, and the colonies, and we know six who return to Scotland, but no more. There may well be more, but we can account for six of them.

There is a tribunal, and we're back to the lovely lady, Miss Lyon. She was researching this tribunal, and this is how really I certainly started to get information, apart from finding lots of papers in Edinburgh which hadn't been read. What happens is, of that thousand pounds, it's put into a pot, and the Earl says to the King, I need to distribute this, and in the letters, he says, I want to distribute this to my people, and I want to give it to the widows. He doesn't ask for it himself. He says, I would like some money, but I don't want it to come from this. This must go to all the people who fought in my militia, or my team. And so a tribunal is set up, and it's chaired by John Clunes, if you remember,

he was the Helmsdale County Commander who came to the prisons, and Captain Hugh Gordon of Carroll, who had his house burned, but didn't take part in the fight. And it's really fairly dispersed, and we know exactly who gets it, and actually, usefully, it says, this goes to the widow of such-and-such, this goes to the widow of so-and-so. So, we know some of the names of the casualties at the fight itself.

And that, I think, is where I will draw a close.