

An Eighteenth-Century musical view of Fort Augustus and Kilchuimen

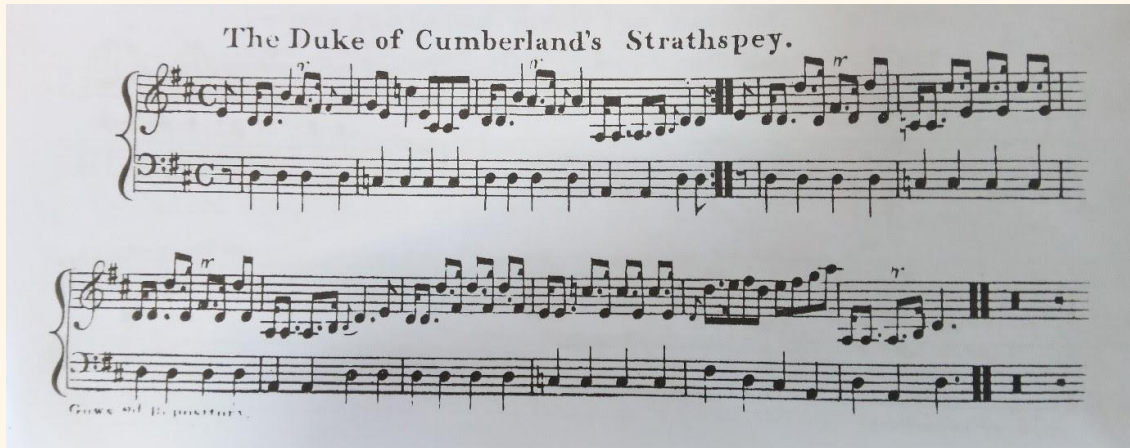
Part One: The Jacobite Rebellions

The C18th was a tumultuous time of change for the whole of the Highlands with its Gaelic language and ancient customs of clan and land tenure increasingly clashing with the rapidly evolving society, culture and economy of the rest of the country. The two Jacobite rebellions of 1715 and 1745 threw these differences into sharp focus - and following Culloden, the Highlands were abruptly and ruthlessly brought into line with the rest of Scotland and Britain. The southern end of Loch Ness was at the epicentre of this upheaval, and this is reflected culturally through the area's rich and diverse musical heritage with pipe and fiddle music aplenty, and a wealth of Gaelic song. Here are some very different pieces of music connected with **Kilchuimen** and **Fort Augustus** from the mid-to-late 1700s and the stories behind them; fiddle music, piobaireachd, Gaelic song, and an English country dance. They help provide a key to understand the people, events and politics of that period; yet they also resonate and still have relevance for our own times today.

The Duke of Cumberland's Strathspey

Following the 1715 uprising, the Kilwhimen Barracks were constructed next to the village at the foot of Loch Ness (they were a similar design as the barracks in Glenelg and Kingussie). Their purpose was to quarter loyal Hanoverian troops to police the surrounding area and maintain a safe corridor along the Great Glen between Fort William and Inverness Castle. However General Wade, in charge of the construction of military roads and fortifications in the Highlands, soon recognised that the barracks' defenses were not sufficiently strong and thus in 1724, he ordered the construction of a more substantial fort on nearby land at the foot of the loch. He named the new fort after King George II's third son, William Augustus, Duke of Cumberland. Fort Augustus was constructed during the period 1729-1742 and successive governors of the Fort encouraged the development of a settlement - initially to be called Wadesburgh - on immediately adjacent land. The settlement soon also became known as Fort Augustus, with this name supplanting the old village name of Kilchuimen.

The Duke of Cumberland's Strathspey would most likely have been written during the latter part of the Duke's lifetime (1721 - 1765) but doesn't appear in any music collection until 1804 when it was published in Gow's Repository of Dance Music, Volume 2.



Source: Gow's Repository of Dance Music, Volume 2 (1804)

Interestingly, in the 6th bar of the B part of the tune, there are three accidental notes not in the same mode / key as the rest of the tune which creates a dissonant and jarring sound. Was this a deliberate, subtle protest against the Duke by the (anonymous) composer?

Listen below;

A screenshot of a YouTube video player. The video title is 'The Duke of Cumberland's Strathspey' by Munro Gauld - Scottish Traditional Flute. The video was uploaded 1 day ago. The video player shows a progress bar at the bottom with a play button icon on the left and a volume icon on the right. The video player is set to play from 0:38 to 1:42. To the right of the video player is a thumbnail image of a man in a red coat riding a horse.



Prince William Augustus, Duke of Cumberland, with Culloden in the background.
Source: National War Museum, Edinburgh Castle

The Duke of Cumberland was, and still is, a controversial figure due to his role in leading the harsh repression of the Highlands after the Battle of Culloden. For the Hanoverian royal family, the Jacobites

threatened their claim to the throne and thus also their wealth and power. It was personal!

Post-Culloden, the Hanoverian were determined to ensure the Highlands were firmly brought under their control and so began the systematic destruction of the whole basis of Highland society, clan power and Gaelic culture. “Butcher” Cumberland led the blunt, violent end of this repression – starting immediately after the battle with all Jacobite captives and wounded prisoners being executed. Over the next three months the Hanoverian troops, based at Fort Augustus, scoured the nearby glens for Jacobite soldiers and sympathisers. Land which was owned by Jacobite supporters was ransacked with houses and buildings burnt. Livestock was either killed or, if of value, stolen and sold (for personal profit by the officers and men) to cattle and horse dealers who came up from England specifically for the purpose. Personal belongings were looted and the remaining household or farm equipment destroyed. People were thus left with no shelter, crops, livestock, clothes or food. Any men suspected of being Jacobites were beaten, tortured or executed on the spot. Women were routinely stripped naked or raped. The brutalisation left a scar on Highland society, the effects of which are still felt today.

Nach bochd abhi ‘m falach – The Jacobites in their hiding places

There are numerous local accounts of the brutality of Cumberland’s soldiers and the atrocities that were committed in the Loch Ness area. William MacKay, in his book *‘Urquhart and Glenmoriston’* sets out the following:

“The Duke of Cumberland left Inverness on 23rd May 1746, and arrived next day at Fort-Augustus, which he made his headquarters till his departure for England on 18th July. During his stay, and indeed until the last remnant of the English army left in August, the district of Glenmoriston, lying within a few miles of the Fort, suffered much.”

“Colonel Cornwallis, marching through Glenmoriston with a body of soldiers, observed two men “leading” dung to their land, and shouted to them to come to him. Instead of obeying, the men, who, knowing only Gaelic, probably did not understand his request, turned their faces away from him. They were instantly shot dead.”

“Major Lockhart ordered Grant of Duldreggan, a peaceable man who had taken no part in the insurrection, and on whose advice the Glenmoriston

men surrendered to Ludovick Grant, to gather together the Duldreggan cattle while he and his men harried and burned another district. Finding on his return next day that the cattle had not all arrived from the remote glens, he stripped Grant naked, bound him hand and foot, and in that condition made him witness the hanging by the feet of the bodies of the three men who had been murdered on the previous day. Grant's life was spared at the request of Captain Grant of Loudon's Regiment; but Lockhart carried away his cattle, set fire to his house, robbed his wife of her rings, and stripped her of her clothes. Of these scenes the aged Lady of Glenmoriston, whose own house and effects were also given to the flames, and who was forcibly deprived of her "plaid and napkin," was an unwilling witness."

Source: Urquhart and Glenmoriston by William MacKay (1914)



Fort Augustus in 1746 by Thomas Sandby (1721-1798)

Source: The Royal Collection Trust

We are fortunate that first-hand accounts by people who had been involved were recorded at the time. In the years immediately after the close of the war, the Rev. Robert Forbes, a minister originally from Aberdeenshire, gathered testimonials, letters and journals from those who had directly experienced the rebellion and its aftermath. His *'The Lyon in Mourning'* manuscript contains an account given by Patrick Grant (one of the 8 Men of Glenmoriston) and his interpreter, Donald MacDonald, to Rev. Robert Forbes on Friday, November 1st 1751:

“In Braes of Glenmoriston a party ravished a gentlewoman (viz., Isabell MacDonald) in Glenmoriston, while her husband, Alexander MacDonald, sculking did see it, and tenants’ wives. That said Isabel MacDonald was ravished as here described in the Brae of Coiraghoth (Corrie Dho), about two miles from the cave, and about six weeks before Lammas; and that one Flora MacDonald, wife of John MacDonald was ravished by the same party at the same time and at the sameplace.”

On Thursday April 9th the Rev. Robert Forbes relates:

“Alexander MacDonell, younger, of Glengarry, did me the honour to dine with me, when I read in his hearing Patrick Grant's Journal in this volume. When I came to the top of page 1,681, he made an observation, which was that when lately in the Highlands, the Laird of Glenmoriston had told him in presence of the two husbands that Isobel MacDonald and Flora MacDonald, after being ravished, formed a resolution not to allow their husbands to lie with them till nine months should be expired, lest they should have been with child, which resolution the husbands agreed to. But they happened (luckily) not to fall with child by the ravishing, nor to contract any bad disease.”

Source: The Lyon in Mourning, manuscript by Robert Fraser (NLS)



The Lyon in Mourning Volume 3
Source: National Library of Scotland

Throughout the Highlands, personal recollections from the period were handed down through subsequent generations. This account of the Hanoverian troop's activities on the Lovat estate on the east side of Loch Ness was given to estate owner Neil Fraser-Tyler by James Gow (1803-1903) of Erchit Wood, Torness:

“After the 1745 rebellion his (James Gow’s) grandfather was, for 13 weeks, concealed in Gorrie’s Cave (Gorrie had been a notorious reiver). The Duke of Cumberland had been sending out parties to burn and spoil the country, killing male children in their cradles. James’ grandfather (John Fraser), known as Iain MacUilleim (John the son of William) and fifteen other boys were concealed in this cave until at last the King forbade Cumberland to perpetrate such cruelties.”

Tales of the old days on Aldourie Estate, Neil Fraser-Tyler and Iain Cameron (c.1920, revised 2002). With kind permission of South Loch Ness Heritage Group:
<https://southlochnessheritage.co.uk/aldourie-estate-tales/>

Given the enormous number of local Gaelic songs, there are surprisingly few which relate to the turmoil of Culloden and its aftermath. One source of local song melodies from the period is Captain Simon Fraser's 1816 Collection - "*The Airs and Melodies peculiar to the Highlands of Scotland*". Fraser was born and grew up at the family home in Ardochy at the head of Stratherrick, some 6 miles northeast of Fort Augustus. He was later to live only two miles westwards from his childhood home at Knockie where he rented a farm. Whilst he was the compiler and editor of the 1816 Collection, Fraser admits in the foreward that most of the tunes had originally been collected by his father and grandfather in the mid to late 1700s. Many of the tunes therefore have a local provenance.

Nach bochd a bhi 'm falach is one such tune. The accompanying note to the tune states:

"This air does not relate to the Prince personally, but to the incident mentioned in the prospectus, of both the editor's grandfathers, with Mr. Fraser of Culdutheland others being obliged for a time to quit their homes and families, and retire to the hills from a pursuit of dragoons, that never ceased to annoy them during the residence of the Duke of Cumberland's army in the vicinity of Inverness and Fort Augustus."

The image shows a musical score for the tune "Nach bochd a bhi 'm falach" and "The Jacobites in their hiding places." The score is numbered 122 and is in 6/8 time. It consists of three systems of music, each with a treble and bass staff. The first system is marked "Slow with Emphasis." and includes dynamics like *p*, *cres.*, and *p*. The second system includes *p*, *cres.*, and *f*. The third system includes *p*, *cres.*, and *f*. The score features various musical notations such as trills (*tr*), slurs, and dynamic markings.

Source: *Airs and Melodies peculiar to the Highlands* by Captain Simon Fraser (1816)

The Gaelic title, *Nach bochd a bhi 'm falach* translates as "A pity it is to be hiding." Fraser provides an alternative English title of "The

Jacobites in their hiding places” with the tune appearing elsewhere as “Everyone must hide.”

Listen below;



The image shows a YouTube video player interface. On the left, there is a play button icon and the title "Nach bochd a bhi 'm falach" by "Munro Gauld - Scottish Traditional Flute". Below the title is a waveform visualization of the audio. On the right, there is a thumbnail image of a musical score for the same piece. The score is in G major and 3/4 time, with a tempo marking of "122." and a performance instruction of "Slow with Emphasis:". The score includes dynamics like *p* and *sf*, and articulation like *tr*. The video player shows a progress bar at the bottom with markers at 0:35 and 2:43.

Like most of the airs in his collection it originally had Gaelic lyrics but unfortunately these were not recorded by Fraser and appears to have been lost. However, an English version of the song "*transcribed from the Gaelic*" is in James Hogg's "*Jacobite Relics, Volume 2*" titled "*The Frasers in the correi*", accompanied by the following note:

"I must beg pardon of the Highlanders for adding so much to the original ideas in this song, by which it is nothing improved. Frazer has a fuller set of the air, I believe, to the same name."

SONG LXXXV.

The Frasers in the Corrie.

FROM THE GAELIC.

"WHERE is your dad-dy gane, my lit-tle May?
 Where has our la-dy been a' the lang day? Saw you the
 red-coats rank on the hall green? Or heard you the
 horn on the mountain yestreen?" "Auld carle graybeard, ye
 speer na at me; Gae speer at the maid-en that
 sits by the sen. The red-coats were here, and it
 was na for good, And the ra-ven's turn'd hoarse w' the
 waughting o' blood.

"O listen, auld carle, how roopit his note!
 "The blood of the Fraser's too hot for his throat.
 "I trow the black traitor's of Sasenach breed;
 "They prey on the living, and he on the dead.
 "When I was a baby, we en'd him, in joke,
 "The harper of Ervick, the priest of the rock;
 "But now he's our mountain companion no more,
 "The slave of the Saxon, the quaffer of gore."

"Sweet little maiden, why talk you of death?
 "The raven's our friend, and he's croaking in wrath:
 "He will not pick up from a bonneted head,
 "Nor mar the brave form by the tartan that's clad.
 "But point me the cliff where the Fraser shides,
 "Where Foyers, Cullathil, and Gerthaly hides.
 "There's slinger at hand, I must speak with them soon,
 "And seek them alone by the light of the moon."

"Auld carle graybeard, a friend you should be,
 "For the truth's on your lip, and the tear in your e'e;
 "Then seek in the corrie that sounds on the brae,
 "And sings to the rock when the breeze is away.
 "I sought them last night with the hunch of the deer,
 "And far in yon cave they were hiding in fear:
 "There, at the last crow of the brown heather-cock,
 "They pray'd for their prince, kneel'd, and slept on the rock."

"O tell me, auld carle, what will be the fate
 "Of those who are killing the gallant and great?
 "Who force our brave chiefs to the corrie to go,
 "And hunt their own prince like the deer or the roe?"
 "My sweet little maiden, beyond you red sun
 "Dwells one who beholds all the deeds that are done:
 "Their crimes on the tyrants one day he'll repay,
 "And the names of the brave shall not perish for aye."

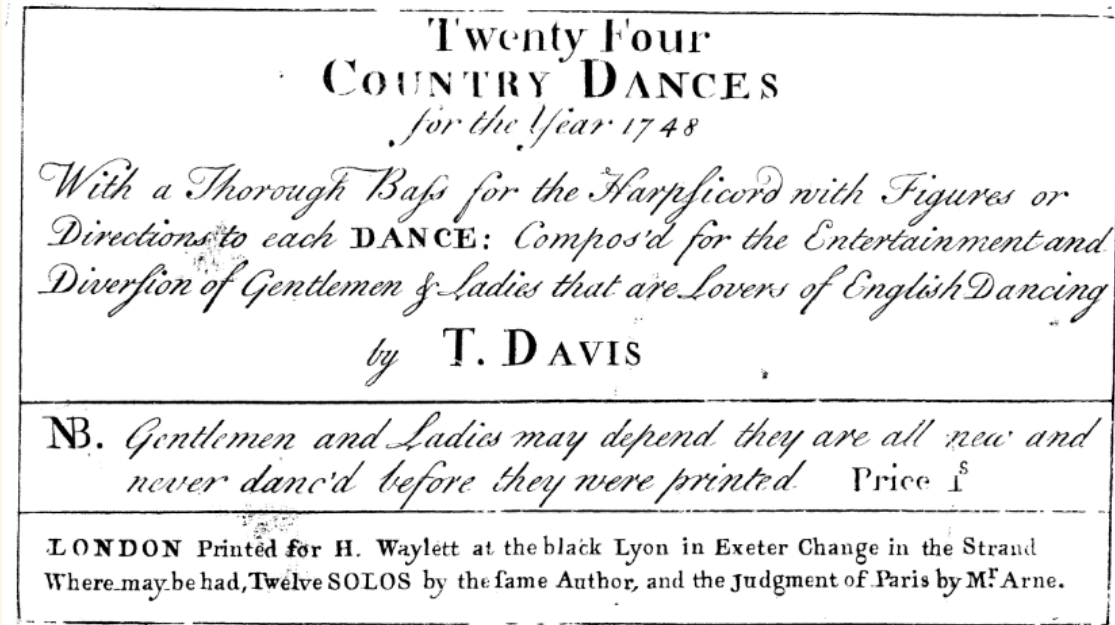
From: *The Jacobite relics of Scotland, Volume 2*, by James Hogg (1821)
 Source: National Library of Scotland

Fort Augustus

A more formal piece of music from the same period is **Fort Augustus** (sic), a 2/4 march with accompanying dance instructions published in London by T Davis in his *"Twenty Four Country Dances for the Year 1748"*.

The music itself is melodically simple: an almost militaristic march of sixteen bars with a repeated phrase. The dance instructions describe a stately, mannered English country dance of the type that was hugely popular in cultured English society at the time. These country dances also became popular in more refined circles in Scotland and would be added to French dances (such as the cotillion and minuet) and the indigenous "Scotch reels" to make up the formal dance assemblies in the larger towns and cities. *Fort Augustus* was "Composed for the

entertainment and diversion of gentlemen and ladies that are lovers of English dancing” and given its intended audience, had little cultural relevance to the local Loch Ness area and the Gaels who lived there.



That *Fort Augustus* is the first dance in Davis’s book is perhaps a reflection of the significance of the events that had recently taken place there. In late 1740s London, Fort Augustus would have been a topical and familiar place name, synonymous with the British army’s recent victory at Culloden, the taming of the wild, remote Highlands, and Cumberland’s “crushing of the rebellious Scots”. Perhaps a near-equivalent to Fort Augustus for us in current times might be Camp Bastion in Helmand Province, Afghanistan – a distant place where there had been an insurrection, but where our army had brought peace and stability, whilst also safeguarding Britain’s interests.

Fort Augustus

First Cu. foot it & cast off into the 2^d Couple's Place, then foot it & cast off into the 3^d Couple's Place. Then lead up to the Top & cast off into the 2^d Couple's Place, then Right Hand & left quite round.

Listen below;

Fort Augustus
Munro Gauld - Scottish Traditional Flute
1 day ago

Fort Augustus

First Cu. foot it & cast off into the 2^d Couple's Place, then foot it & cast off into the 3^d Couple's Place. Then lead up to the Top & cast off into the 2^d Couple's Place, then Right Hand & left quite round.

For the Crown, the establishment and Davis's intended 1748 customers, the use of the name "Fort Augustus" for a genteel society dance would be a fitting way of commemorating and cementing the Hanoverian victory. However, for the inhabitants of the glens around Kilchuimen in 1748, the executions, destruction, and brutality of the immediate aftermath of Culloden would have been all too freshly experienced and seared in their memories. Whilst Fort Augustus may well have been danced at society assemblies in London, Bath or Edinburgh, I very much doubt whether it was, or perhaps has ever been, danced in Kilchuimen.

Article by Munro Gauld,

from research carried out with Raghnaid Sandilands