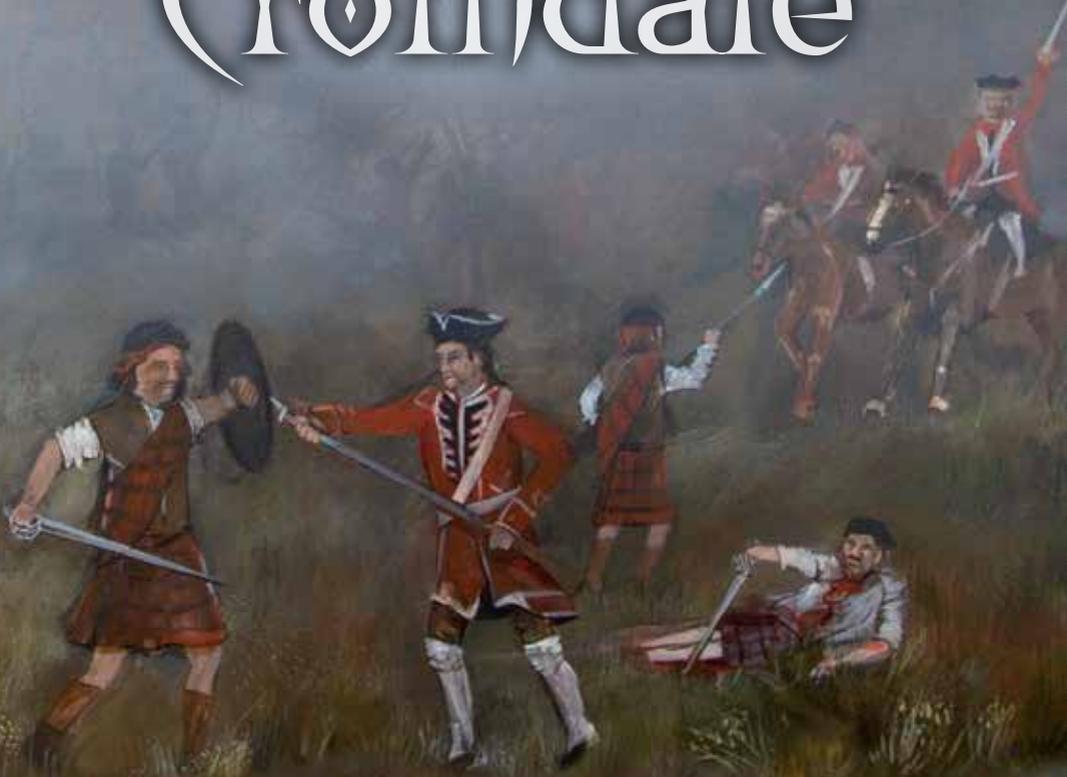




Battle of Cromdale



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The Battle of Cromdale 1690 The end of the first Jacobite War

The rout of the Jacobite army on the Haughs of Cromdale, early on the morning of the 1st of May, 1690, heralded the end of the first Jacobite war.

While the Union of the Crowns in 1603 laid the basis for peace between England and Scotland, continual strife led to civil wars. With the death of King Charles II in 1685, the Duke of York – a professed Catholic – took the throne as James II of England and VII of Scotland. This provoked Protestant uprisings by his illegitimate nephew, the Duke of Monmouth, in England, and by the Duke of Argyll in Scotland. Both were put down.

Dundee leads the cause

James went into exile in France following the so-called Glorious Revolution in 1688. At the invitation of the Protestant aristocracy, the Dutch Protestant William of Orange took the throne in place of the Catholic Stuart king. But the new regime did not win universal support. James – whose supporters were known as Jacobites – secured French help and led an army in Ireland. In Scotland, John Graham of Claverhouse, known as Bonnie Dundee, took up the Jacobite cause.

Dundee rallied some 2,000 men and, in July 1689, delivered an early victory in the Battle of Killiecrankie, against a government

army twice as strong led by Major General Hugh MacKay of Scourie, Commander of the Scottish Government's army. But it was a pyrrhic victory. Dundee, leading a cavalry charge, was killed when a musket ball pierced a joint in his armour. His death had far-reaching consequences. Command passed to Colonel Cannon, a less talented Irish officer who, in August, led the Jacobites to defeat at the Battle of Dunkeld.

The winter brought a period of relative peace though both sides plundered civilian settlements for much-needed supplies. During this time, General Thomas Buchan replaced the ineffective Cannon at the head of an army reduced to some 1,500 clansmen – MacDonalds, MacLeans, Camerons, MacPhersons and Grants of Invermoriston.

Crucial decisions

In a council of war at Nethybridge, some of the clan chiefs thought Buchan should take up a position in Glenlochry, on rough ground on the east side of the Cromdale hills where they knew they would be safe from cavalry attack. The general, though, was keen to recruit the Grants of Strathspey. In the hope that the army's presence would encourage this, he took up a more exposed position at Cromdale, in plain sight of Castle Grant.

Buchan placed outposts at the Ford of Cromdale Kirk, at other crossing points upstream and downstream on the River Spey and a larger force at Lethendry. But these precautions were to prove disastrously inadequate.

A government force under Sir Thomas Livingstone had set out from Inverness and Elgin. It consisted of six troops of Royal Scots Dragoons, two troops of cavalry and a battalion of infantry, supported by Highland scouts drawn from the Grant and Mackay clans.

Surprise attack

Early in the morning of the 1st of May, 1690, the government force launched a surprise attack on the Jacobite camp. They crossed the River Spey around three in the morning. Some of the Grants were mounted on dragoon horses to speed their advance, which in part was concealed by stands of birch trees. The Jacobites were caught off guard. Many of them were still asleep. Despite a brave attempt by some to stand and fight, including the MacLeans who managed to cut down a number of horses, most of General Buchan's men fled into the hills.

It was a disastrous rout which heralded the end of the first Jacobite war. Sir Thomas Livingstone claimed to have killed

300 to 400 Jacobites, though the number in reality would almost certainly have been less. He also reported taking 100 prisoners, including those defending Lethendry Castle. Only four men on the government side were reported wounded.

The government troops celebrated their victory with captured claret and wore green branches in their hats to celebrate May Day. With the defeat of James's army in Ireland, at the Battle of the Boyne then at Aughrim, the first Jacobite Rising came to an inglorious end. The cause would not be taken up again in Scotland until 1715.



Battlefield landscape



Castle Grant

Tomvaich



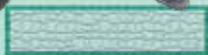
Cromdale Kirk

River Spey

River Spey



Congash



Battlefields Inventory Boundary



Government lines



Jacobite lines



Tom An Uird

Keppoch's Retreat

CAMP AREA

Dallachapple Burn

CROMDALE

Knocknahigle

Claggersnich

Lethendry Castle

Ballachule

Haughs of Cromdale

Claggersnich Wood

Buchan's Flight

Pipers Stone

Hill of Lethendry

Cannon's Flight

Cromdale Burn

HILLS OF CROMDALE



The ruins of Lethendry Castle

The last engagement

The Battle of Cromdale could be described as the Culloden of the first Jacobite Rising in Scotland. Like the Battle of Culloden on the 16th of April, 1746 (the last battle fought on British soil), Cromdale marked the last major engagement of the campaign and resulted in Jacobite defeat.

Today, the area is relatively little changed since the time of the battle. Various landmarks, such as Cromdale Kirk and the ruins of Lethendry Castle, stand as monuments to this much overlooked but very important event in Scotland's history.



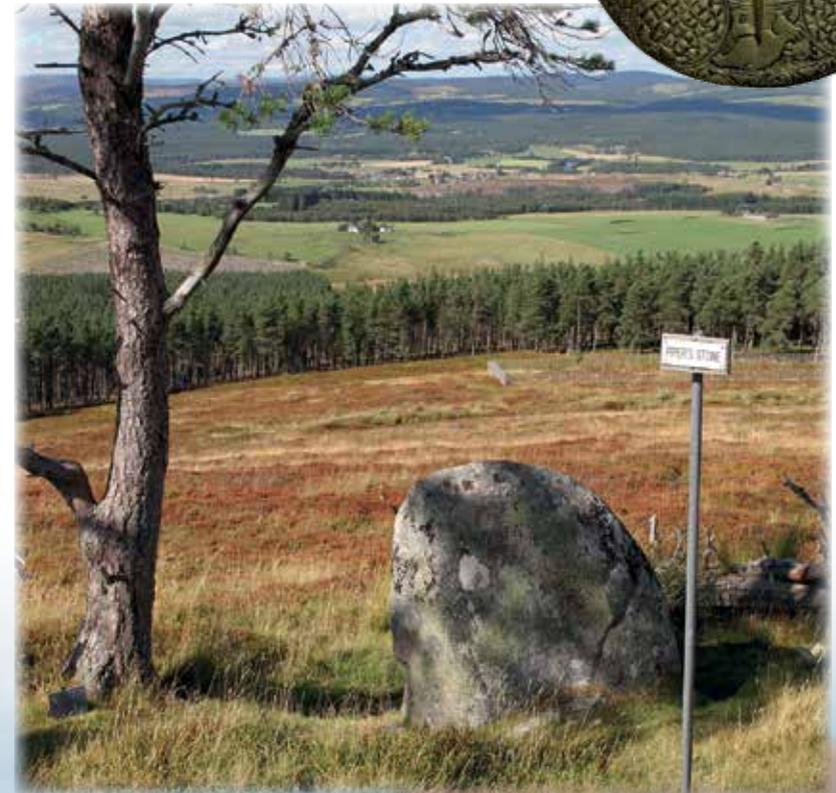
Cromdale Kirk

Alarm sounded too late

Cromdale Kirk still commands a key position by the River Spey. It stands by the ford (since replaced by a bridge) across which part of the government force advanced in the surprise, early morning attack on the Jacobite camp on the Haughs of Cromdale. A small number of Jacobites guarded the kirk and did their best to hold off the attack, but were quickly overwhelmed. While they managed to sound the kirk bell to warn the camp, it failed to prevent a decisive Jacobite defeat.



Brooch found on the battlefield displayed in the Grantown Museum



The Pipers Stone overlooking the battlefield



Overlooking battlefield from Lethendry Castle

Castle quickly taken

Jacobites garrisoned Lethendry Castle prior the Battle of Cromdale. Like those at Cromdale Kirk, they were to stand guard over the approaches to the camp on the Haughs of Cromdale. Despite its commanding position, government troops quickly took the tower during their attack. It is said that around 100 men were captured at the castle and the nearby mill. Today, Lethendry Castle is a picturesque ruin – one of many which illustrate Scotland’s rebellious past.



The plaque on the wall of the Cromdale Kirk outbuilding describes the Battle of Cromdale, 1690



A traditional ballad

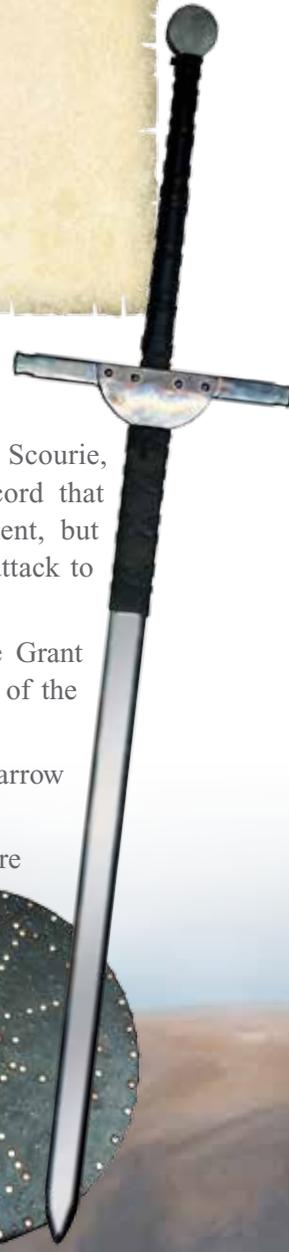
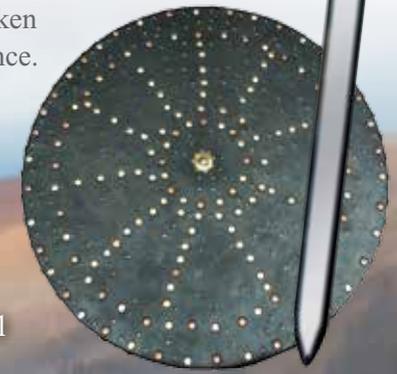
The Battle of Cromdale has been immortalised by the pipe tune “Haughs of Cromdale”, as well as the ballad:

*When to the Highlands I was bound
To view the Haughs of Cromdale,
I met a man in tartan trews,
I spiered at him what was the news,
Quo’ he, “The Highland army rues
That e’er we came to Cromdale.”*

Crucial factors

The memoirs of Major General Hugh MacKay of Scourie, Commander of the Scottish Government’s army, record that only six or seven horses were lost in the engagement, but no men. He attributed the resounding success of the attack to three factors:

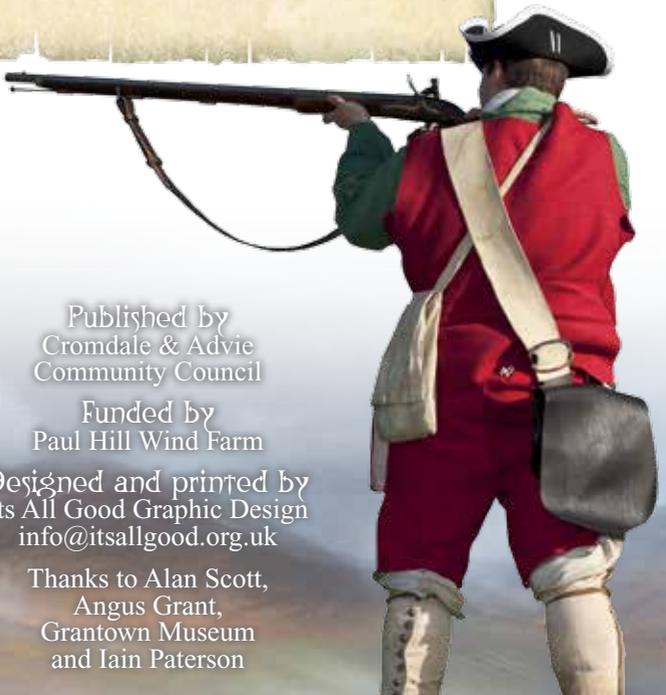
- A Captain of the Grants locked the gates of Castle Grant to prevent anyone leaving and warning the Jacobites of the approaching cavalry.
- The cavalry risked ambush by advancing through a narrow pass in darkness.
- The Jacobites had just arrived the previous day and were in open ground, not the usual broken terrain that provided a good defence.





The battle of Cromdale, fought in 1690, could be described as the Culloden of the first Jacobite Rising in Scotland, in that it marked the last major engagement of the campaign and resulted in Jacobite defeat.

The battle area today is relatively little changed since the time of the battle and various landmarks, such as Cromdale Kirk, the ruins of Lethendry Castle and the Pipers Stone, stand as monument to this much overlooked but nonetheless very important event in Scotland's history.



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