

Ye Jacobites by Name

Jacobite Servants in London Town

William Grant, a laborer by trade, was one of several remarkably unlucky men caught up in the Jacobite Rising of 1715. When the exiled heir to the Stuart throne returned to Britain to overthrow the recently crowned King George I, thousands in Scotland and England flocked to the banner of the “Pretender.” Among these was the nobleman John Erskine, Earl of Mar. Unfortunately for them both, Mar’s vassals in Aberdeenshire, Scotland were not at all as enthusiastic as he was.¹ William Grant was among the many reluctant Scots who refused to join his regiment.

When the Earl of Mar’s men arrived to conscript Grant into the regiment for an invasion of England, Grant and several of his neighbors fled their homes and hid in the hills. In retaliation, the Earl of Mar “sett fire to their houses, and corn-yards.” Parties of Jacobite soldiers were sent after the men, capturing Grant and at least fourteen of his neighbors.²

Filling his ranks with kidnapped men, the Earl of Mar’s regiment was a liability. The Earl left most of his men in Scotland, and dispatched only Major Nathaniel Forbes’ company in the invasion of England.³ Grant’s continuing back luck found him conscripted to that doomed company and forced to march to the town of Preston in Lancashire.⁴

It was in this market town that the Jacobites were surprised by the sudden arrival of trained British soldiers. Grant and the other men of the Earl of Mar’s regiment (now reduced to a mere thirty men), barricaded themselves in the town home of Sir Henry Houghton, a local Whig member of Parliament and opponent of the Jacobites.⁵

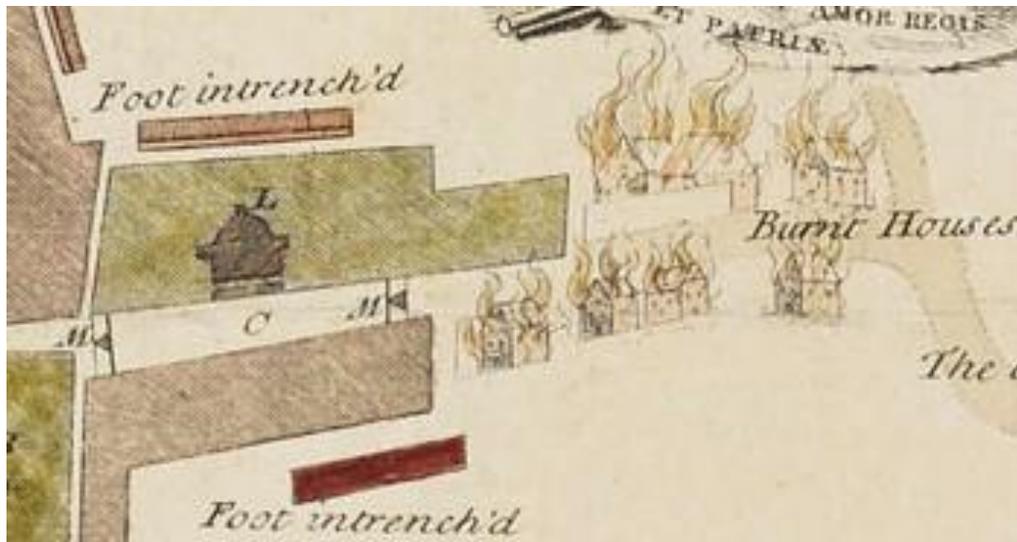
¹ Reid, Stuart, *Sheriffmuir, 1715*, Frontline Books: 2014, page 163.

² Allardyce, James, ed. *Historical Papers Relating to the Jacobite Period, 1699-1750*, Volume 1, New Spalding Club: 1895-1896, pages 55-56

³ Reid, *Sheriffmuir, 1715*, page 163.

⁴ Prisoner Rolls, Preston, #149 from “Jacobite Prisoners in Lancashire, Winter 1715/16,” <<http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~tornabene/index4.htm>>.

⁵ Reid, Stuart, *Sheriffmuir, 1715*, Frontline Books: 2014, page 93.



Detail from *A Map and Plan of the Town of Preston*, Abel Boyer, c.1715, Royal Collection Trust/© Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2017. The building labeled "L" is Houghton's house, where Major Forbes' Company barricaded themselves at the beginning of the battle.

Street to street fighting ensued, lasting for days. The English pushed hard against barricades on three separate fronts. Houghton's house was caught between two trench lines of English infantry. When Jacobite snipers picked away at the English troops, the houses around them were set alight to force them from their positions, much the same way that the Earl of Mar had burned Grant's home to force him into the rebellion.⁶

On the night of October 13, when some of the highland troops learned that negotiations for surrender had begun, they rampaged through the streets. They threatened, wounded, and even killed those they suspected of favoring capitulation.⁷ Grant must have feared his fellow soldiers, who may very well have suspected a conscript of wanting the conflict to end. Mercifully, on the morning of November 14, 1715, William Grant and 1,467 of his Jacobite comrades surrendered to the English commander General Charles Wills.

⁶ "General History of the Highlands: 1715," Electric Scotland, accessed November 1, 2017, <<http://www.electricscotland.com/history/genhist/hist56.html>>.

⁷ "General History of the Highlands: 1715," Electric Scotland, accessed November 1, 2017, <<http://www.electricscotland.com/history/genhist/hist56.html>>.



Detail of map cartouche from *A Map and Plan of the Town of Preston*, Abel Boyer, c.1715, Royal Collection Trust/© Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2017

Held in deplorable conditions, fifteen men (including Grant) made an appeal for release because they were forced to join the rebellion. A hearing was held, and witnesses called, all of whom supported the prisoners, but the court was not swayed. Grant and his fellow conscripts were sentenced to transportation.⁸

William Grant was one of more than eighty Jacobite rebels loaded onto the *Friendship*, which sailed from Liverpool on May 24, 1716 and arrived in Annapolis on August 20 of that same year. A week after the *Friendship* dropped anchor, William Grant's servitude was purchased by Thomas Davis, a quarrelsome tavern keeper in London Town.⁹

It was just about this time that Davis sold his tavern and moved out of London Town, so Grant's time here must have been brief.¹⁰ His neighbor and fellow conscript William Davidson remained behind in London Town along with four other Jacobite servants, all of whom appear to have been volunteers to the cause.

⁸ Allardyce, *Historical Papers*, Volume 1, pages 55-58

⁹ Maryland State Archives, *Provincial Court Land Records, 1709-1719*, Volume 720, page 396, <<http://msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc2900/sc2908/000001/000720/html/am720--396.html>>.

¹⁰ Maryland State Archives, *Anne Arundel County Court Judgment Record*, C91-4, Liber TB2, August Court 1715, Folio 93.