

# Battle of Culloden



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

The battle of Culloden Moor, fought on 16 April 1746, took less than an hour to reach its conclusion and extinguish the Scots' hopes of returning a Scottish Stuart king to the throne of Scotland. This was a battle between the Jacobites, who were the supporters of Bonnie Prince Charlie, and the Hanoverian British army; and it brought to a bloody end the Jacobite uprising of 1745. The lead-up to this battle started in the 1630s, which was a period of religious and political upheaval in Britain.

In 1688 the Catholic King James VII of Scotland and II of England was deposed by Protestant nobility in favour of William of Orange, as the Protestants were fearful that King James was trying to create a Catholic dynasty. He was exiled to France but still had much support from Ireland and Scotland; however, he did nothing about it. It was not until his son was born that hopes for a new Stuart king fuelled the fervour of already unhappy followers. By the age of 13 Charles Edward Stuart (Bonnie Prince Charlie) began to realise that he could accomplish a dream and regain the throne that was rightfully his in the first place.

At the age of 23 Prince Charles, with the support of a French invasion force and the blessing of his father, travelled to Scotland to make his claim and lead the House of Stuart back to the throne. Once in Scotland, it did not take Charles very long to persuade one chief after another to join him in his quest. Within one month of arriving in Scotland, Charles had raised his standard in Glenfinnan and the Government realised that a rebellion had begun. Charles' men marched for London in an attempt to encourage the English Jacobites to join them.

Meanwhile, the Government had assembled two of their own armies; one was concentrated in the north-east near Newcastle and the other was to defend the English midlands. With little support from the English Jacobites, and with two government armies behind them and believing there was a third in London, the Scottish Jacobite commanders lost confidence in the Prince's leadership and decided to withdraw to Scotland. It was at this time that Charles had to face the strongest army to be set against him – that of Lord Cumberland. As winter eased into spring, the two sides drew closer together.

The Jacobite army took Inverness at the end of February; at the beginning of April, Cumberland's forces began their advance west from Aberdeen. The Jacobite troops were widely spread across the Highlands and were urgently summoned to rejoin the Prince's army. However, the Jacobite army was stretched to breaking point: food and money were in short supply and they were not at full force. There were many who believed they could not win a battle in this state. Cumberland's troops marched from Aberdeen and were closing in on the Jacobite army in what they believed would be a decisive battle.

They arrived at Nairn and set up camp on 15 April with approximately 9000 troops, most of whom were trained soldiers. Charles' army numbered approximately 5000 and had limited formal battle training. In their weakened state, the Jacobite Army agreed on a final desperate plan: they believed they could defeat Cumberland's army in a surprise night attack. This could have been a brilliant military strategy as the sleeping Royal army would have had

no chance against the Jacobite troops. Instead, it was a chaotic disaster as men fell far behind and got lost in the boggy country.

Their gamble had failed and as dawn broke, the Jacobite army was not close enough to launch its attack and was forced to retreat: hungry, exhausted and discouraged. Prince Charles' men had hardly had time to rest when news came that Cumberland was ready for battle. Never was an army less fit for battle than that which Charles now had to lead. Cumberland assembled his men in two lines; the left flank was anchored on a low stone wall running along the south end of the field towards Culloden Park. Another regiment was assembled forward of his left flank, able to fire their guns at any attack by the Jacobites from the right wing.

Behind the wall he assembled Horse Dragoons and government militia to infiltrate the park around the Jacobite flank. The Jacobite army also formed their troops in two lines: the front line was made up of exhausted highland foot soldiers with guns on the flanks and in the centre. The second line included their horse regiments and the Scots and Irish regiments of the French army. The Jacobite army's weaponry, outnumbered three to one, opened fire first but had little impact due to the lack of trained gunners and Cumberland's fire was far more deadly.

For about twenty minutes the superior artillery of Cumberland's army assaulted the Jacobite lines, before Charles issued the order to charge. Despite the odds, a large number of Jacobites managed to reach Cumberland's lines and the battle was decided by charging highlanders clashing with redcoats armed with bayonets and muskets. About 2500

Jacobites were dead or wounded and Cumberland took about 560 prisoners. The casualties on Cumberland's side were significantly lower with about 52 dead and 259 wounded. In the space of about sixty minutes, Cumberland's army was victorious, bringing to an end the Jacobite rebellion.